2 OF 4 Collector's SPECIAL ISSUE

LONG LIVE VINYL

ISSUE 04
JULY 2017
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Fleetwood Mac
Rumours

+

ESSENTIAL JAZZ
40 must-have records from 1955-70

SGT. PEPPER at 50

FEATURED

Thurston Moore
Classic Album Sundays
The ORG Music story

+

AMERICAN EPIC
Vinyl history revived with Jack White & Robert Redford

Inside the timeless Beatles masterpiece
Plus extensive new boxset review

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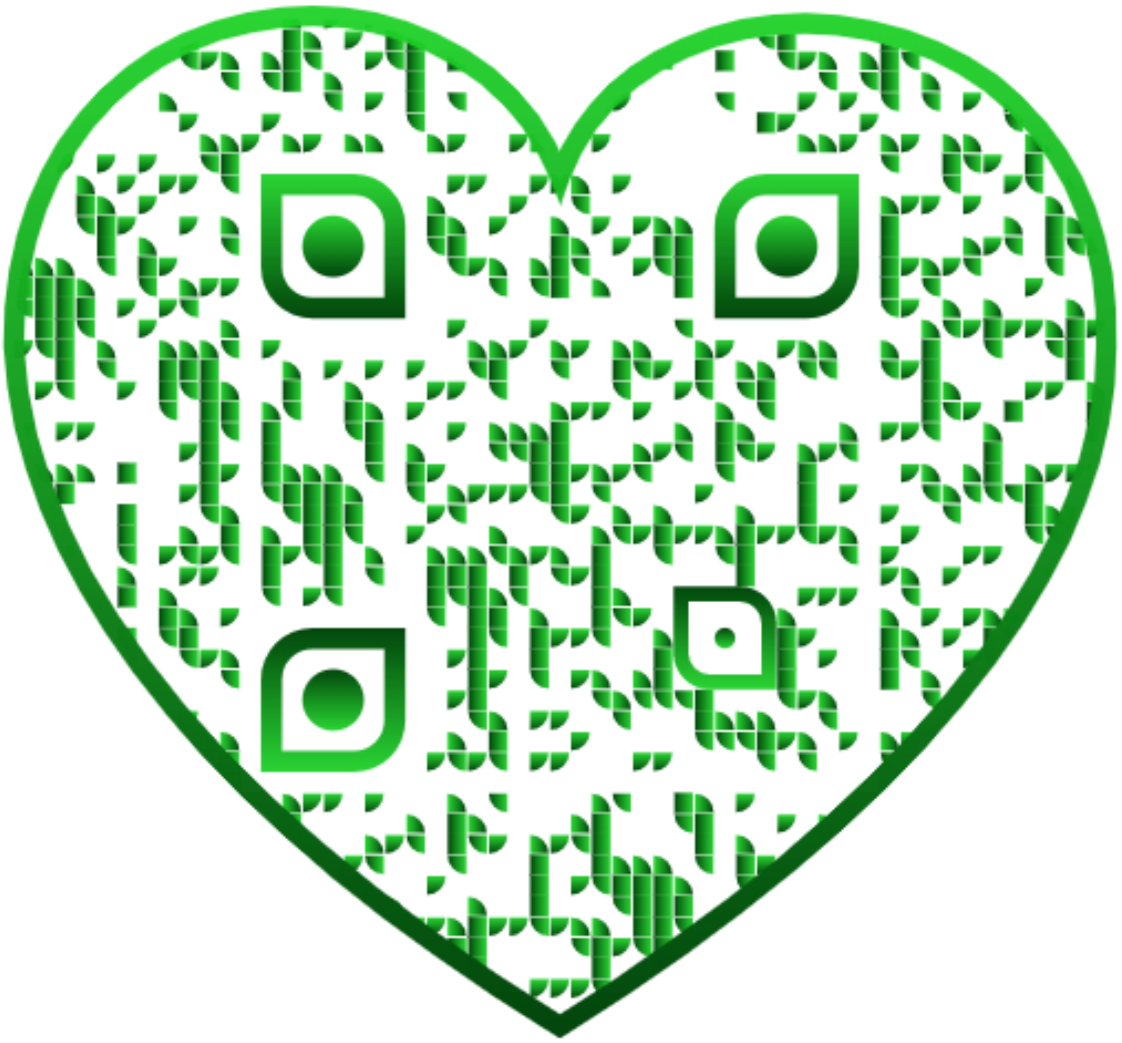

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Illustration Joe Murtagh

Welcome...

Our fourth issue of *Long Live Vinyl* goes on sale on the very date that, 50 years ago, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released – a true lightning-bolt moment in the history of recorded music. Debate continues to rage, half a century later, over whether it was the pinnacle of The Beatles' dizzying roll call of epochal studio achievements – an all-too-brief technicolour explosion of creativity that changed the musical landscape and popular culture forever. While some point to the genre-shifting genius of *Revolver*, or the consistent pop splendour of *Rubber Soul*, what's not open for debate is the effect *Pepper* had on recorded music – legions of bands forever affected by its radical, game-changing approach, led by the incomparable George Martin.

Our four collector's-edition covers could justifiably have been five – Martin had a very real claim to being the fifth Beatle. Without his work on *Pepper*, there would have been no *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, no *OK Computer* – definitely no *Definitely Maybe*. His influence cannot be overstated, and Martin's son Giles has done a remarkable job of revisiting this 50-year-old classic for a reissue that throws fresh light on arguably the world's most important LP.

Our fourth issue goes on sale on the very day that, 50 years ago, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was released

Whatever your view on *Pepper*, our 10-page cover story gets to the heart of its making, and is essential reading for Fab Four fans. When you're done, turn to page 102 for our in-depth review of the new boxset – Ringo fans are in for a treat!

Also this issue, we lift the lid on *American Epic* – the great untold story of an equally pioneering musical journey. For a decade, a documentary team led by Allison McGourty and Bernard MacMahon, with the help of Jack White and T Bone Burnett, have been on a mission to honour the legendary American musicians who, in the 1920s and 30s, cut some of the very first recorded 'folk' music – direct to shellac, in the field – and in the process paved the way for John, Paul, George, Ringo and all of us vinyl collectors. Without them, our shelves would be bare.

Finally, a plug for our new event, The Vinyl Festival. Staged at the iconic Printworks London venue, over the weekend of 23 to 24 September, with headline DJ performances from Tim Burgess, Huey Morgan, Steve Lamacq and Edith Bowman, plus a huge record fair, indie-label stalls, hardware high street and street food and craft beer, it promises to be an unmissable weekend for vinyl lovers. We're incredibly proud to be putting it on, and can't wait to welcome you to the event. See you there!

Gary Walker *Editor*

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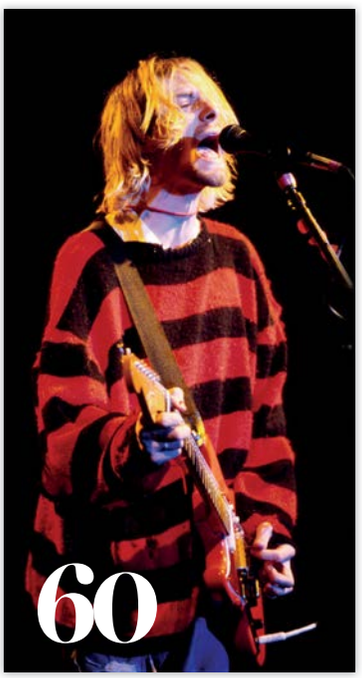
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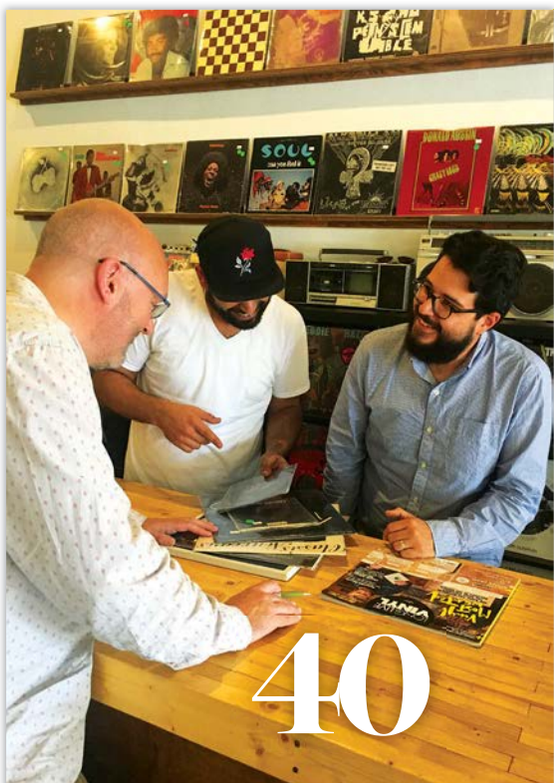

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LONG LIVE VINYL

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their current favourite Beatles album...

Gary Walker
Help!

Jenny Cook
Rubber Soul

Alison Zak-Collins
Revolver

Andy Cottle
Abbey Road

Ian Peel
The Beatles 1967-1970

Meet our expert contributors...

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins and founded the band Snowbird. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Gareth Murphy
London born but Dublin raised, Gareth Murphy's childhood was enlivened by his father's work in the 1970s and 80s as a pioneer concert promoter. Now based in Paris, he has produced numerous compilations and is the author of *Cowboys And Indies – The Epic History Of The Record Industry*. He has just completed Seymour Stein's memoirs, *Siren Song*, which will be released next year.

Martin Kelly
With the exception of periods of non-vinyl financial priorities, former magazine editor Martin Kelly has been a collector of original pressings of the finest jazz records for 30 years. Martin writes the *Into Somethin'* blog, where you can enjoy the glacial pace at which he catalogues his prized possessions, shares arcane knowledge and spins tall tales of holy grails.

Laura K Williams
Laura started her journalism career covering news and features for regional and national newspapers and magazines. She went on to edit *247 Magazine* and has contributed to a wide range of music publications, including *Clash*, *Classic Pop* and *Louder Than War*. As the founder of Figure 8 Festival, she helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 00s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and more. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him during an interview in a strop.

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On the record

BOWIE'S GOLDEN DISCS

Four new vinyl releases for Bowie aficionados – including a pair of collectable gold discs

Record Store Day was pretty exciting for Bowie fans, but June is set to be the best month of the year with four – four! – special new vinyl releases. First up, Parlophone's ongoing series of picture discs celebrating the 40th anniversary of each of Bowie's singles reaches *Be My Wife*. Originally the second single from *Low*, it will be backed by a previously unreleased live recording of *Art Decade*, recorded when the Isolar II tour arrived at the Perth Entertainment Centre in Australia on 15 November 1978. The photos on both sides of the disc come from Paris in June 1977 and the archives of Christian Simonpietri. There's also a two-track red vinyl version of *I'm Afraid Of Americans*, its sleeve depicting Bowie in front of a wall in Mexico City, taken by Mexican photographer Fernando Aceves. Trent Reznor's *V1 Edit* is on the A-side, with a rare acoustic live version of *Heroes* from the Shoreline Amphitheatre in California on 20 October 1996 on the B-side.

Also, look out for two gold-vinyl LPs: *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* and *Hunky Dory*. They're being issued for the 45th anniversary of the release of *Ziggy…* as a "strictly limited-edition one-off run". The 7" picture disc and gold-vinyl albums are on general release, though the LPs will be available only in "bricks-and-mortar stores and their online store-fronts, not from online-only retailers". The red vinyl will be harder to source: it's being issued to mark the arrival of the *David Bowie Is* exhibition at the Museu Del Disseny in Barcelona.

Iggy Pop's first two solo albums – *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life* – are being re-released in a variety of vinyl formats to celebrate their 40th anniversary and Iggy's 70th birthday

Classic Pop

To celebrate the double-whammy of Iggy Pop's 70th birthday and the 40th anniversary of the release of his first two albums, a trio of Deluxe editions has been announced for 2 June. His debut, 1977's *The Idiot*, will be pressed on orange translucent vinyl, the perfect platform for an album of game-changing, Bowie-infused electronica that preceded *Low* and kicked off the Berlin Trilogy.

Follow-up to *The Idiot*, *Lust For Life*, will be pressed on clear vinyl with 1978's *TV Eye Live 1977* completing the set with a translucent purple pressing. They're all also available on 'unlimited edition' black vinyl and, if you buy all three coloured editions from udiscovermusic.com for £50, they'll come packaged in a limited tote bag with the *Lust For Life* cover art on one side and *The Idiot* on the other.

SILVA SCREEN SCORE

The month's top soundtrack vinyl announcement has to be a Silva Screen reissue of Italian soundtrack maestro Piero Piccioni's score for the 1971 action flick, *Puppet On A Chain*. The film itself may be lost in the mists of time, but Piccioni is ripe for reappraisal not only for this – which runs the gamut from the dark, industrial *Mystery* to the out-and-out sax funk of *The Discotheque* – but for his hundreds of other soundtracks from the 60s and 70s. A worthy addition if your vinyl collection already takes in the likes of Lalo Schifrin, John Barry and Ennio Morricone.

The Vinyl Festival is coming!

Fancy digging crates, hearing top DJs, browsing the latest hardware, eating street food and drinking craft beer? Of course you do! *Long Live Vinyl* is proud to present The Vinyl Festival – a weekend-long celebration of the format, taking place at Printworks London, from 23 to 24 September

Early Bird tickets are now on sale for The Vinyl Festival, taking place in London's Docklands on 23 and 24 September. This inaugural event, from the makers of *Long Live Vinyl*, is the UK's biggest and best celebration of all things vinyl – featuring household-name DJ headliners, a massive record fair, a hardware showcase, Q&A sessions, street food, a range of craft beers and more.

We've booked Printworks, London's most talked-about new music venue, for a weekend that will rank alongside Record Store Day as a highlight in every vinyl-lover's calender. A-list artists, DJs and vinyl aficionados will headline both days, taking to our main stage for Q&As and to spin some of their most cherished records.

The Vinyl Festival will be a crate-digger's paradise, with pop-up shops, indie-label stalls and second-hand record traders. For audiophiles, there will be turntables, headphones and all manner of hardware to browse and test out. There'll be gallery exhibitions of classic artwork and sleeve designs, and live music, too, with sets from some amazing turntablists. We'll also be offering craft beer and exciting street food. In short, it's *Long Live Vinyl*... live!

Where is it? The Printworks in London's Docklands. When is it? Saturday 23 September and Sunday 24 September 2017. Put those dates in your diary, and read on for more...

THE HEADLINERS

You'll hear compelling sets from musicians and DJs who have spent their whole careers recording, playing, collecting and curating music on vinyl. And we've just confirmed our first four headliners – Steve Lamacq, Tim Burgess, Huey Morgan and Edith Bowman. With The Charlatans, Tim Burgess has just released the band's 13th album, *Different Days* – and last year, he published a brilliant account of his record-collecting exploits, *Tim Book Two: Vinyl Adventures From Istanbul To San Francisco*.

One of the UK's most important protagonists for new music and emerging bands, Steve Lamacq has become a linchpin of BBC 6 Music. He joined the station after 16 years with Radio 1 and has recently presented a series of landmark documentaries on BBC Radio 2, including *Biff! Bang! Pow! The Story Of Creation Records*.

One of a select few musicians to have been a panelist on both *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* and *Question Time*, Huey Morgan scored three Top 10 albums with Fun Lovin' Criminals before becoming a mainstay on BBC

THE VINYL FESTIVAL

23-24 SEPTEMBER 2017
PRINTWORKS LONDON

INTRODUCING THE LINE-UP…

Huey Morgan

Steve Lamacq

Tim Burgess

Edith Bowman

Radio 2 and BBC 6 Music. He recently published his first book, *Rebel Heroes: The Renegades Of Music & Why We Still Need Them*.

A champion of the mainstream vinyl revival, Edith Bowman regularly dedicates the last hour of her Virgin Radio breakfast show to vinyl. She's also a devout fan of film soundtracks, and a recent book, *Great British Music Festivals*, compiled her reviews and photographs of some of the country's best- and lesser-known events.

Joining our four headliners will be our host, Colleen 'Cosmo' Murphy, of Classic Album Sundays. Colleen will also be holding CAS sessions on both days, where you can kick back and listen to an expertly curated selection of albums on the finest hi-fi equipment.

THE VENUE

With so many different areas and such a stunning post-industrial look, we've found the ideal venue for The Vinyl Festival. The Printworks opened in January this year, and has already become the most talked-about music venue in London. In March, Gorillaz took over the space for a secret gig, when Damon Albarn's cartoon troupe performed their new album *Humanz*, with guests including Noel Gallagher, De La Soul and Jean-Michel Jarre. In April, The Printworks celebrated the 40th anniversary of Studio 54, the iconic New York club, with a performance by the 500-strong Some Voices community choir. In July, Afropunk will take over the venue for its two-day *We Are The People* festival, with Lianne La Havas and Thundercat headlining.

EARLY BIRD TICKETS

For a limited time only, you can get your hands on Early Bird tickets to The Vinyl Festival, saving a tidy 25 per cent off the standard ticket prices. Tickets start from just £16, with day, weekend and VIP packages available. For more info and to book your Early Bird tickets, head to www.thevinylfestival.com.

FIND US ONLINE

We'll be reporting on the progress of The Vinyl Festival as it takes shape in the coming months, both here in the magazine and on our website and social media. You can also find out more about the show at the Festival's official website – www.thevinylfestival.com – and on its brand-new social media pages: **facebook.com/vinylfestuk**, **@vinylfestuk** on Twitter and **@vinylfestuk** on Instagram. Ticket info is on the website, as is contact information for exhibitors and traders.

THE GRATEFUL DEAD AT CORNELL

Of all the 'Dead' live albums, none has been more acclaimed than *Cornell 5/8/77*. A recording of the group in their prime at Cornell University's Barton Hall, it's to be reissued as a five-LP set, limited to 7,700 copies (see what they did there?). Grateful Dead's late archivist Dick Latvala said the concert was "deemed so important to the history and culture of the United States" that a copy has been added to the Library Of Congress' National Recording Registry.

WALLS HAVE EARS

NY DESIGN FESTIVAL EXHIBIT SHOWS OFF AUDIO-WALLPAPER TECHNOLOGY

One of the most mind-boggling projects unveiled at the Collective Design fair at New York's NYCxDesign Festival last month was *Connect*, an audio-wallpaper display from UM Project and Flavor Paper. The display's interactive, functional wallpaper connects speakers and lighting. It uses ink that can conduct electricity and audio signals – the ink is infused into the wallpaper tiles, with each tile joining up via a set of copper tabs. "What interests us in the collaboration is, of course, using simple technology, connective ink," François Chambard of UM Project told *Dezeen*, "but also the opportunity to bring together 2D design and 3D design into some kind of immersive experience." Connective ink is "not a new thing", says Chambard, but we don't expect to see audio wallpaper in Homebase any time soon.

Quote of the month

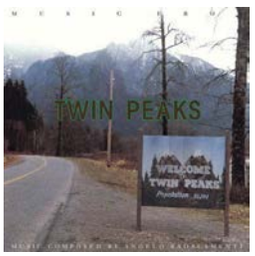
DON – THE RECORD

Of the inspiration behind his new compilation, *Don Letts Presents Culture Clash Radio*, which is out 2 June via Station 5, the man himself says: "I'm a child of the vinyl generation, with an analogue attitude that was informed by the music I consumed. It's a selection of sounds that spoke to my head, my heart and my feet. Tracks that moved and made me the man I am today."

We hear you… Turn to page 16 for more Don…

PEAK TIME

***Twin Peaks* is enjoying a whole new lease of life, with a new series having just begun airing on Sky Atlantic on 22 May. And to coincide, the music of the original series – and the spin-off movie – have been treated to special new vinyl editions, released via Rhino Records.**



***Soundtrack From Twin Peaks* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* are both 180g discs and are masterclasses in ambient composition, courtesy of David Lynch's collaboration with composer Angelo Badalamenti. Lynch wrote the lyrics for the three vocal pieces on the TV soundtrack – *The Nightingale*, *Into The Night* and *Falling* – which were given a memorable performance by the singer from his 1986 movie *Blue Velvet*, Julee Cruise. See our verdict on the new releases on page 107.**

PURPLE AGAIN

PRINCE'S *PURPLE RAIN* IS REISSUED ON 180G AND 140G VINYL

23 June sees the reissue of Prince's *Purple Rain* album on 180-gram black vinyl and 40-gram picture disc. The black-vinyl edition is an exact replica of the original US pressing and includes the original's limited edition full-colour poster of Prince with The Revolution.

But for vinyl-heads, that's it. You'll have to buy the accompanying CD and DVD release to explore the mountain of extra material. The two-CD *Purple Rain Deluxe* adds an 11-track *From The Vault & Previously Unreleased* bonus disc. And the two-CD/DVD *Purple Rain Deluxe – Expanded Edition* serves up a 15-track *Single Edits & B-Sides* compilation and a 1985 NY live DVD. Fortunately, most of the *Single Edits & B-Sides* have recently been reissued on vinyl, as part of an ongoing series of 12" remasters.

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

Fact – there's no more money left in the music industry. Does that mean emerging acts should just give up trying? Of course not…

Here's an imaginary TV listing: *The Let Down*. A new series on Sky Atlantic about a young band from The Bronx, or just about anywhere, who live a kind of *Groundhog Day* existence in the music business – where nothing new and exciting ever seems to happen. Sounds boring? It is! *Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays/Fridays/Saturdays/Sundays – 12am-11.59pm*.

Of course, you know this already, because you read the news, you follow the industry journals from time to time, have friends in bands, you keep your ear to the ground and for the last 10 years, folks have been saying stuff like: "We've been through the doom and gloom period," and: "We are out of the trough and coming slowly but surely into a period of growth."

So when I say there is literally *no* money in the music business anymore, you can shrug and think I'm just being a grouchy old cynic – and one who is clearly being overly pessimistic. You may think to yourself: 'What does a 55-year-old know about today's vibrant thriving music scene?'.

And you are so right. I don't know anything about it… because for the most part, it doesn't exist. Fleetingly, a comet shoots across our skies, thrilling us with the speed and the drama, bewitching us with the glow of its spectral tail. Fittingly, our own Fleet Foxes (now with Warner Bros.' white winter cosy coats on), who burst out of nowhere selling a million records here, were one such dazzling light.

But that was almost 10 years ago and, yes, Stormzy and several other equally bright sparks in greying and gloomy skies have come along since to give us hope. But for 99.9 per cent of new bands, the dream isn't even a *Peel Session* or a headline show at Shepherd's Bush Empire: it's just to be *reviewed*. Once a given, now a Holy Grail. A radio play, a paragraph online – harder to achieve than you could believe, so saturated is the marketplace.

When I sign a new band, the wooing process of yore is now more of a vetting process. It's about checking they 'get it'

In the cold light of today's industry, the sobering fact is that many shops are overflowing with records they can't sell, and the radio stations are barely able to listen to the plague of new releases every week. All the while, media headlines shout that 'vinyl sales approach those of peak periods in the 70s' – without caveating those articles by clarifying that 99 per cent of those sales are reissues of classic albums *from* the 70s – and that they were sold in Sainsbury's!

As a small retailer, you can't afford to get your sales predictions wrong more than a couple of times. The likes of Tesco can, but they're not the heart of this industry.

But hey, if you ask me, in many ways things have never been better or more exciting than they are now – provided you can accept that money is unlikely to be forthcoming any time soon. But most people we work with aren't motivated solely by money – it's a labour of love. Do this because you have to; because you would be doing it anyway, whether anyone liked it or not. Do this because when something good happens you'll say: "How awesome is it to be doing this?" and not: "How much am I getting?".

When I sign a new band, the wooing process of yore is now more of a vetting process. It is more about giving a lesson in reality and checking they 'get it'.

Because, truly, if you are a new band, unless you are blessed/cursed with the false financial fillip of a major-label deal, or supported by a wealthy benefactor, or have incredible good fortune in line with the same chances you might have of winning the lottery, you better prepare yourself for years of barren harvest. It's what I call The Let Down. If you're happy to proceed, knowing that, you'll be fine. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins and founded the independent record label Bella Union***

There are actually quite a few surprises for fans on *OKNOTOK* – including unreleased tracks *I Promise*, *Lift* and *Man Of War*

Radiohead Are NOT OK

OK Computer gets an anniversary reissue, with bonus tracks, on various tantalising vinyl formats

A band who rarely look back, Radiohead have announced special vinyl releases to celebrate the 20th anniversary of their magnum opus, *OK Computer*, which delivered four mesmeric singles in *Karma Police, Paranoid Android, Lucky* and *No Surprises*. And we're pleased to say that, unlike other expansive Deluxe packages announced this month (Prince's *Purple Rain*, for example), *OKNOTOK*, as it's been dubbed, will centre around vinyl as opposed to CD.

23 June sees the release of a newly remastered triple-vinyl edition featuring the original album, eight B-sides and three previously unreleased tracks, *I Promise, Lift* and *Man Of War*. But hold on to your wallet because, next month, those three LPs are boxed into a set which also adds a cassette and not one, but three, books.

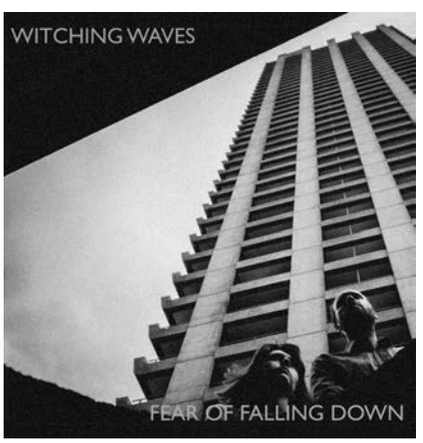
The first is "a hard-cover book containing more than 30 artworks (many of which have never been seen before) and full lyrics to all the tracks (except the ones that haven't really got any lyrics)", XL Recordings explains. There's also a 104-page notebook from Thom Yorke's library of scrawled notes of the time, a sketchbook containing 48 pages of Donwood and Tchock's 'preparatory work' and a C-90 cassette mixtape compiled by the band, taken from *OK Computer* session archives and demo tapes. The triple-LP is on general release, but the boxed version will be exclusive to the group's online store. And both products will come with download codes for WAV files of every track.

REEL WORLD

Eight classic album reissues from Peter Gabriel's Real World label are on their way this summer

In tandem with Peter Gabriel's *Music For Films* albums (see story on p18) his Real World label has also announced plans to remaster and re-press eight classics. June and July will see a crop that includes Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's first release for the label, *Shahen-Shah* and his Massive Attack-inspiring *Mustt Mustt*. Gabriel himself appears on Geoffrey Oryema's *Exile*, while he curated another one of the reissues, *Passion Sources*. Originally released alongside his soundtrack for Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation Of Christ*, *Sources* gathers the songs and rhythms from around the world, and from deep in the National Sound Archive, which inspired the soundtrack. Remastered at half speed and playing at 45rpm, all the Real World cuts have been overseen by Matt Colton at Alchemy Mastering.

THE THE VERSUS EBAY
The The are making an extra supply available of the one-off single *We Can't Stop What's Coming*, which became one of the most popular singles on Record Store Day 2017. Featuring *Mind Bomb*-era collaborators James Eller and Johnny Marr, and *Infected*-era drummer Zeke Manyika, it was the first The The single for a staggering 15 years.



Breaking Waves

Witching Waves' debut album, hailed by indie blogs as one of the best LPs of 2014, is set to be re-pressed on splatter-effect black and white vinyl. A limited edition of 300, *Fear Of Falling Down* has been pressed by Odd Box Records. "The record was originally released on Soft Power Recordings, now sadly defunct," says Odd Box's Trevor McCabe. "It has long since sold out, and the record sells for a small fortune second-hand."

Kraft Tales

Kraftwerk have a 17-date tour of the UK and Ireland this month and have just released an 'audio/video documentary' of 2012 to 2016's '3-D' tour of the world's art museums. *3-D The Catalogue* is on vinyl, Blu-ray, DVD, CD and download and includes each album performed live. From the 70s, there's *Autobahn* (1974), *Radio-Activity* (1975), *Trans-Europe Express* (1977) and *The Man-Machine* (1978). From the 80s, they performed *Computer World* (1981) and *Techno Pop* (1986); there's also 90s reboot *The Mix* and 2003's studio swansong *Tour De France*.

Live renditions of all eight albums are included in a nine-LP boxset, expanded to take in *The Mix*'s double-album length. All tracks were mixed by Ralf Hütter at his Kling-Klang Studio in Düsseldorf. There's an abridged edition, too, which distils highlights from every concert down to a 77-minute double-vinyl edition.

CRIMINAL RECORDS

Chris Roorda from The Netherlands' Deepgrooves Records is setting up his own vinyl pressing plant… in a WWII prison. With co-founder Pascal Thulin, they've moved into the Blokhuispoort penitentiary in Leeuwarden. Decommissioned in the 80s, it's since become a venue for gigs and festivals. "The options for pressing vinyl records are limited," Roorda explains. "This has led to a situation where getting your records pressed is mostly done by a few large vinyl pressing plants, resulting in a huge bottleneck. Deepgrooves has a user-friendly, one-stop-shopping concept where artwork, mastering and other services are being provided from a single point of contact."

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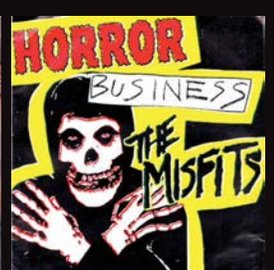

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On The Radar

IDLES

This rising South West punk band are ready to take the festival scene by storm

The release of appropriately named debut *Brutalism* in May followed a performance at SXSW and a sold-out UK tour for Bristol punks Idles. The record – which was named Album Of The Day by BBC Radio 6 Music on its release – is described by the band as "a necessary epitaph to the addictions, shadows and women in our lives".

Originally from Devon, Idles had already been playing together for a few years before moving up the M5 to Bristol. Singer Joe Talbot says: "It's gone well, because we stuck to our guns for seven years, kept our heads down, enjoyed ourselves and each other and worked fucking hard. I think our ethos and tone has a more pertinent ring to it in this current time and place, which has helped us get heard."

The first run of 500 copies of *Brutalism* sold out almost instantly via the band's website and at gigs, with the second run now on sale. Joe continues: "The sleeve has an original art piece by my old man and me; page two is an open letter to my mother; the third page is a list of gratitude to the people that helped us build this ship and the back cover is a tracklisting imposed on an image of my partner's vagina. All are relevant to us as a family and what the record became.

"We released it on vinyl, because people want it as a format. If you want it on mp3, it's because you want the songs or album – but if you want it on vinyl, it's because of the relationship the listener has with records, the physicality or the sonic individuality vinyl has. Also, it sells better, as people respect it more."

You can catch Idles at over 15 festivals this summer. The band will also be making an appearance at London's Rough Trade East on 20 June. For details, see idlesband.com ●

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Total sales value £300,000

ALAN MCGEE (CREATION RECORDS)
Collection of artwork and memorabilia from McGee's time in the music business
Total sales value £30,000

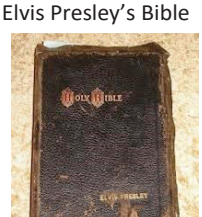
PORL THOMPSON (THE CURE)
Auction of instruments, equipment, stage clothing, artwork & memorabilia.
Total sales value £75,000

THE IAN CHAPEL COLLECTION
A life's work. One off sale of one collectors entire collection of over 5,000 records.
Total sales value £80,000

Ringo's Help Cape

SOLD £61,000

Elvis Presley's Bible



SOLD £59,000

63 Beatles Negatives

SOLD £29,900

Oasis Demo

SOLD £6,075

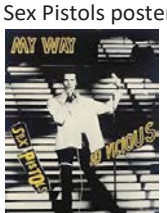
SOLD £6,785

SOLD £1,955

Rolling Stones acetate

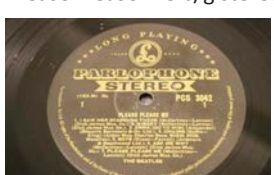
SOLD £4,012

Sex Pistols poster



SOLD £1,121

Please Please Me b/g stereo



SOLD £10,527

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Signed 7" Please Please Me

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SOLD £23,000

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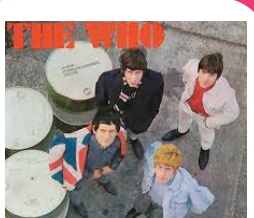

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CRATE DIGGING WITH... Don Letts

Filmmaker, musician and latter-day BBC 6 Music linchpin, **Don Letts** also has a pretty amazing record collection and a deep-rooted love of vinyl. So, who better to head out with for an afternoon of crate-digging? Don's latest venture, the 19-track *Culture Clash Radio* is more an 'audio autobiography' than a Various Artists compilation…

MARVIN GAYE
WHAT'S GOING ON

"A radical break from the normal Motown fare, this was actually the first long-player I ever bought. Essentially a concept protest album, it remains as relevant today as when it was made, back in the early 70s."

PRIMAL SCREAM
SCREAMADELICA

"An indie-rock outfit inspired by house, that mixed in elements of dub and even gospel to produce what is a masterpiece of rave culture. Who said the drugs don't work?"

SHUGGIE OTIS
INSPIRATION INFORMATION

"This multi-instrumentalist's combination of psychedelia, funk, rock and soul had a lot in common with what Sly & The Family Stone was doing, but he only ever received cult status. A lost treasure…"

THE CLASH
(WHITE MAN) IN HAMMERSMITH PALAIS

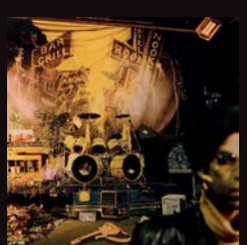
"A single that'll be forever close to my heart, as I actually took Joe Strummer to the Hammersmith Palais on the night that inspired this song!"

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS
CATCH A FIRE

"Bob's first album for Island Records was a quantum leap in reggae. The addition of guitar and keyboard overdubs by the Muscle Shoals session musicians really set it apart, and gave it a unique sound."

THE BEACH BOYS
PET SOUNDS

"Strangely, this record received a lukewarm reception on release in the US. Led by the Brits, it's now recognised as one of the most influential albums ever made. If you ain't got this, your collection's not complete!"



PRINCE
SIGN 'O' THE TIMES

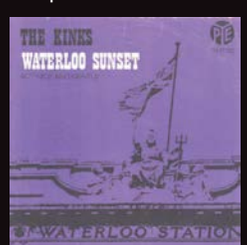
"A double album full of electro funk, hard rock and avant-pop that works on the dancefloor and in the bedroom, too. It also features *Forever In My Life*, one of my favourite love songs of all time."

BOBBY GOLDSBORO
SUMMER (THE FIRST TIME)

"I discovered this single in my early teens. If you check the lyrics, it's not hard to see why it appealed to my budding sexuality. The lyrical narrative and its cinematic delivery, really hit the spot."

WHODINI
MAGIC'S WAND

"I was lucky enough to be living in New York when hip-hop was exploding all over the city. This 12" totally captures the sound of the streets and the atmosphere of the emerging hip-hop scene."



THE KINKS
WATERLOO SUNSET

"A musical ode to the city I love. This 45 was the first single I ever bought and it still sits on my jukebox to this very day. Along with The Clash's *London Calling*, it remains this town's greatest anthem."

IAN PEEL'S
LINER NOTES

Long Live Vinyl's founder gets drawn into The Beatles' *…Inner Groove*, putting the spotlight on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*'s two, secret, hidden tracks – and the world of run-off-groove madness they've since inspired

After *A Day In The Life* brings *Sgt. Pepper…* to a rousing crescendo, with its "scary" (as Brian Wilson found it) final chord, you might be inclined to lift your tonearm and think it's all over. But there's more, much more! First of all, they cut a 20,000Hz tone into the vinyl, right after that last song. George Martin had been telling the band about how certain frequencies were only audible to certain species, so they decided that an untitled 14th track should be added, purely for their dogs to enjoy.

This is followed by another hidden track, *Sgt. Pepper's Inner Groove*: a riotous sound collage originally dismissed as "silly nonsense" by George Martin. "We mumbled a few words into tape, cut the tape up, and recorded the result backwards," he once recalled. They then placed their creation in the run-off groove of the vinyl, something which only those with a manual turntable would ever hear.

"I think it was probably Paul that said: 'If ever people don't have the modern machines, they will hear something that will knock their socks off,'" George Martin explained. "So we said: 'All right, let's do it.'

"They just went down into the studio and I said: 'Just sing the first thing that comes into your head when I put the red light on.' All four of them sang something quite ridiculous, and I lopped off about two seconds of it, and then stuck it round into a circle and laid that in the groove."

> ***"They went into the studio. I said: 'Sing the first thing that comes into your head when I put the red light on'"***
> **GEORGE MARTIN**

As to what The Beatles actually said when the red light went on is anyone's guess. General consensus is that "I never could see any other way" rings out above the noise. Although when played backwards, the phrase "We'll fuck you like Superman" becomes clear.

Few listeners eventually heard the collage, as it was not included on US pressings of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Capitol Records employees thought it was a mistake on the master reel and discarded it. So the first time American listeners got to hear the track was when it was included on 1978's *Rarities* compilation, where it had a title for the first time: *Sgt. Pepper's Inner Groove*.

UK record buyers, on the other hand, were treated to two quite different versions on the mono and stereo pressings of *Sgt. Pepper's…*

The Beatles' *…Inner Groove* experiment has since inspired a host of imitators and homages. Brian Eno used the run-off groove to end Side One of *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)* with infinite chirping crickets. Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* locked in the sound of water dripping. *The Dukes Of Stratosphear* (XTC's *Pepper…*-inspired psychedelic alter ego), the James Gang, M, The Who, Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo and Peter Gabriel have all also tried it. Gabriel's is possibly my favourite: *White Shadow*, the final track on Side One of 'Scratch', becoming infinitely long thanks to The Beatles' run-off-groove trick. But what are your favourite run-off groove cuts? Let us know… ●

991

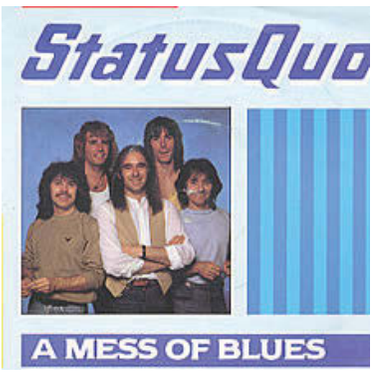
YOUR MOST VALUABLE VINYL

Each issue, our friends at 991.com trawl through the crates and bring us four more prized collectables. All values are for mint or near-mint condition copies

THE SPECIAL A.K.A.
GANGSTERS

Rare, rubber-stamped-sleeved 1979 UK first-issue solid-centre 7" vinyl with black-and-white picture labels. Also includes *The Selecter* by The Selecter and comes housed in the very rare rubber-stamp-style 'The Special A.K.A.Vs. The Selecter' die-cut paper sleeve.

Value **£85 to £100 (if mint)**



STATUS QUO
A MESS OF BLUES

Scarce, withdrawn 1983 UK injection-moulded label 7", also including *Big Man*. This copy is in the reversed picture sleeve with smiling group photo on the front and 'table' picture on the reverse. The sleeve shows only light wear and the vinyl looks barely played. QUO 12

Value **Around £35**

THE JAM
GOING UNDERGROUND

This 1980 UK limited-edition five-track double vinyl 7" EP includes *The Dreams Of Children* plus *Away From The Numbers*, *This Is The Modern World* and *Down In The Tube Station At Midnight*, live from The Rainbow Theatre, 1979. Flipback picture sleeve. Minor edgewear to the sleeve. POSPJ 113

Value **Around £30**

ERASURE
OH L'AMOUR

This 1986 UK Mute three-track 12" vinyl single from Erasure includes *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!* and *March On Down The Line*, in '*Thomas The Tank Engine*' picture sleeve. The *Thomas*-style12" picture-sleeve version was withdrawn and replaced by a die-cut black version.12 MUTE 45

Value **Around £20**

Gabriel On Film

Peter Gabriel issues half-speed remasters of film soundtracks

Peter Gabriel's ongoing mission to remaster and re-press all of his albums for vinyl continues on 28 July, with the most collectable set yet. The *Music For Films* series will present half-speed remasters of his *Birdy*, *The Last Temptation Of Christ* and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* soundtracks. "I still love all the possibilities and different disciplines involved in working for film," Gabriel says. "I'm pleased people will have the chance to revisit the work on these records with these vinyl reissues." Gabriel famously added so much extra to the soundtracks, they became albums in their own right: *The Last Temptation Of Christ* was retitled *Passion*, and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* became *Long Walk Home* to reflect this. All three releases are cut to 45rpm (and are numbered editions with a download code); *Birdy* and *Long Walk Home* now span two discs each, while *Passion*, originally released as a double, is now a triple, with music on the first five sides and an etching on the sixth.

SECRET LONDON

The Secret List cover London in the latest of their guides to record stores in major cities. "The aim is for a well-designed and produced book, printed on high-quality paper, a quality, tactile product," they say. *The Secret List London*, available for £10 from Sister Ray, Phonica and Rough Trade East, has 96 pages, with "each shop anonymously reviewed – at least twice – and assessed for its stock, 'finds' and staff".

BIG DAY OUT

Who was spotted in Smugglers Records in Deal buying a copy of The Evil Usses' new album, *Amateur Pro Wrestling*? None other than Vic Reeves himself, as Instagrammed by the store @smugglersrecordshop – one of Kent's indie-store go-tos.

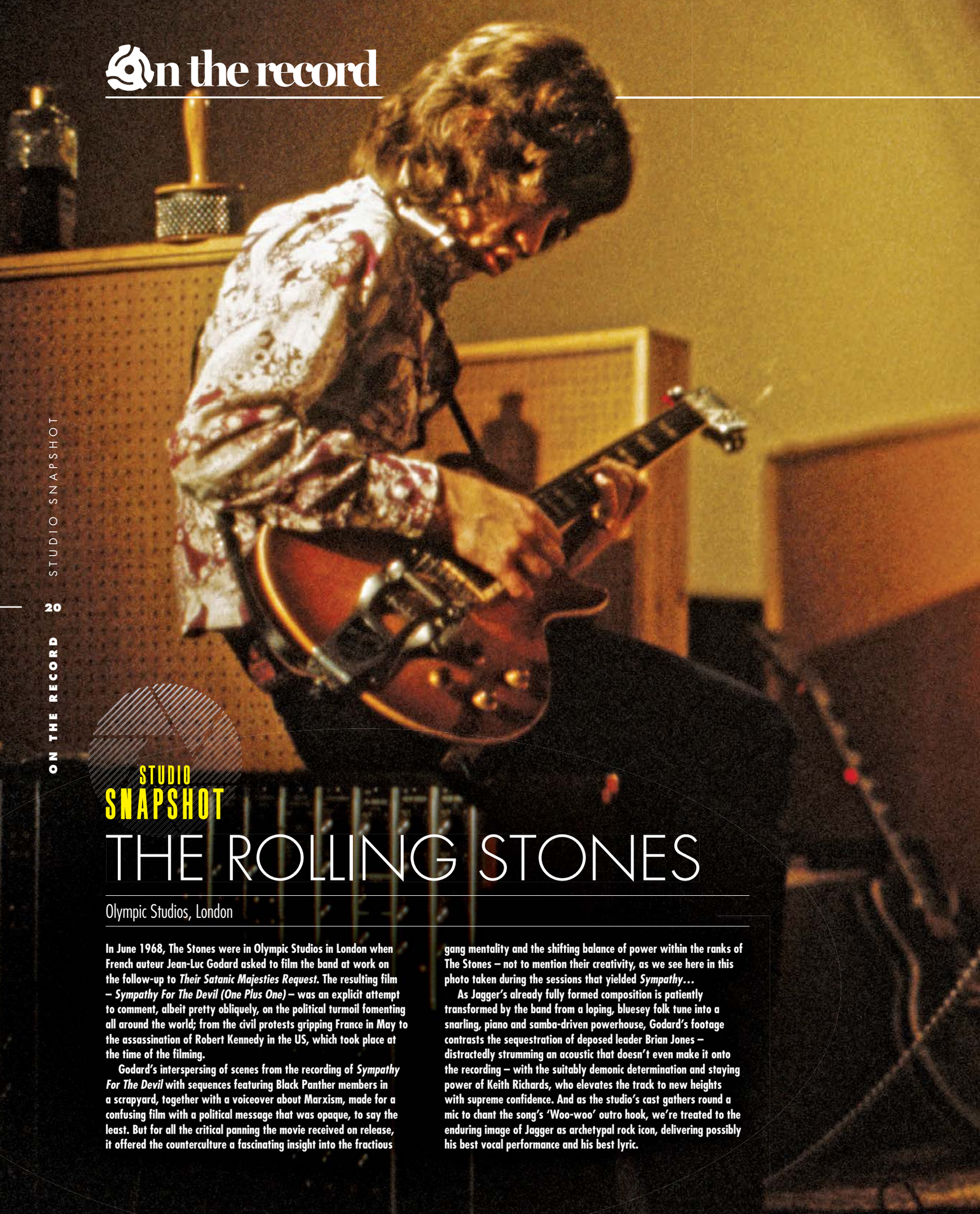
THIS IS THE TOWEL

Rough Trade release the new album from This Is The Kit, *Moonshine Freeze*, on 7 July. Available on limited-edition red vinyl, the first 500 orders placed via Rough Trade's online store will include a set of six postcards and a This Is The Kit tea towel.

#2 We're Only In It For The Money

The Mothers Of Invention

Shot by *Blonde On Blonde* photographer Jerry Schatzberg, the cover for this 1968 album by Frank Zappa – the godfather of experimental psychedelic rock – was an obvious parody of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* sleeve from the previous year. With Jimi Hendrix appearing on the right of the sleeve, near to Zappa wearing a miniskirt, it mocked the Flower Power generation, with song titles including *Who Needs The Peace Corps?* and *Flower Punk*. Zappa said in a 1971 interview that: "I personally felt for a long time that [The Beatles] were extremely plastic, and flat-out commercial." Zappa reportedly phoned Paul McCartney asking for permission to ape Sir Peter Blake, Jann Haworth and Michael Cooper's design, but Macca told him it was a decision for the suits. It didn't go down well with the labels, either, with Capitol's objections seeing the release delayed by five months and Verve eventually deciding to run the *Pepper…* parody inside the sleeve with the intended gatefold shot of the band (in drag) as the cover. Later releases restored the original cover to its rightful place and the furore didn't stop *We're Only In It For The Money* from reaching No. 30 in the Billboard Chart and being listed at No. 297 in *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Albums Of All Time in 2015.



STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

THE ROLLING STONES

Olympic Studios, London

In June 1968, The Stones were in Olympic Studios in London when French auteur Jean-Luc Godard asked to film the band at work on the follow-up to *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. The resulting film – *Sympathy For The Devil (One Plus One)* – was an explicit attempt to comment, albeit pretty obliquely, on the political turmoil fomenting all around the world; from the civil protests gripping France in May to the assassination of Robert Kennedy in the US, which took place at the time of the filming.

Godard's interspersing of scenes from the recording of *Sympathy For The Devil* with sequences featuring Black Panther members in a scrapyard, together with a voiceover about Marxism, made for a confusing film with a political message that was opaque, to say the least. But for all the critical panning the movie received on release, it offered the counterculture a fascinating insight into the fractious gang mentality and the shifting balance of power within the ranks of The Stones – not to mention their creativity, as we see here in this photo taken during the sessions that yielded *Sympathy…*

As Jagger's already fully formed composition is patiently transformed by the band from a loping, bluesey folk tune into a snarling, piano and samba-driven powerhouse, Godard's footage contrasts the sequestration of deposed leader Brian Jones – distractedly strumming an acoustic that doesn't even make it onto the recording – with the suitably demonic determination and staying power of Keith Richards, who elevates the track to new heights with supreme confidence. And as the studio's cast gathers round a mic to chant the song's 'Woo-woo' outro hook, we're treated to the enduring image of Jagger as archetypal rock icon, delivering possibly his best vocal performance and his best lyric.

AMERICAN EPIC

This new star-studded TV documentary series and film about field recordings of artists from the USA's distant past has revived some long-lost record-production technology. **Jonathan Webster** meets the people behind a pioneering project…

It's been a full decade now since an Anglo-American team of documentary filmmakers, led by producer Allison McGourty and director Bernard MacMahon, set out on an epic journey to explore the huge variety of folk, rural and regional music recorded in the United States during the late 1920s.

That was the first time, thanks to new electrical recording technology, that Americans had heard each other in all their richness and variety. And it reshaped the whole concept of popular music.

What triggered that journey – culminating in a magnificent BBC TV series called *American Epic*, which had just started airing as this issue went to press – was a visit to a UK blues festival by the aforementioned MacMahon.

The director heard that three veteran blues musicians (David 'Honeyboy' Edwards, Homesick James and Robert Lockwood Jr.) were going to be performing. "I thought, 'I really need to film these guys,'" he tells *Long Live Vinyl*. "They were all in their 90s, and clearly weren't going to be around for much longer. And so I got together a good-quality film crew and did two-hour interviews with each of them. Some of that footage is contained in the blues section of *American Epic*."

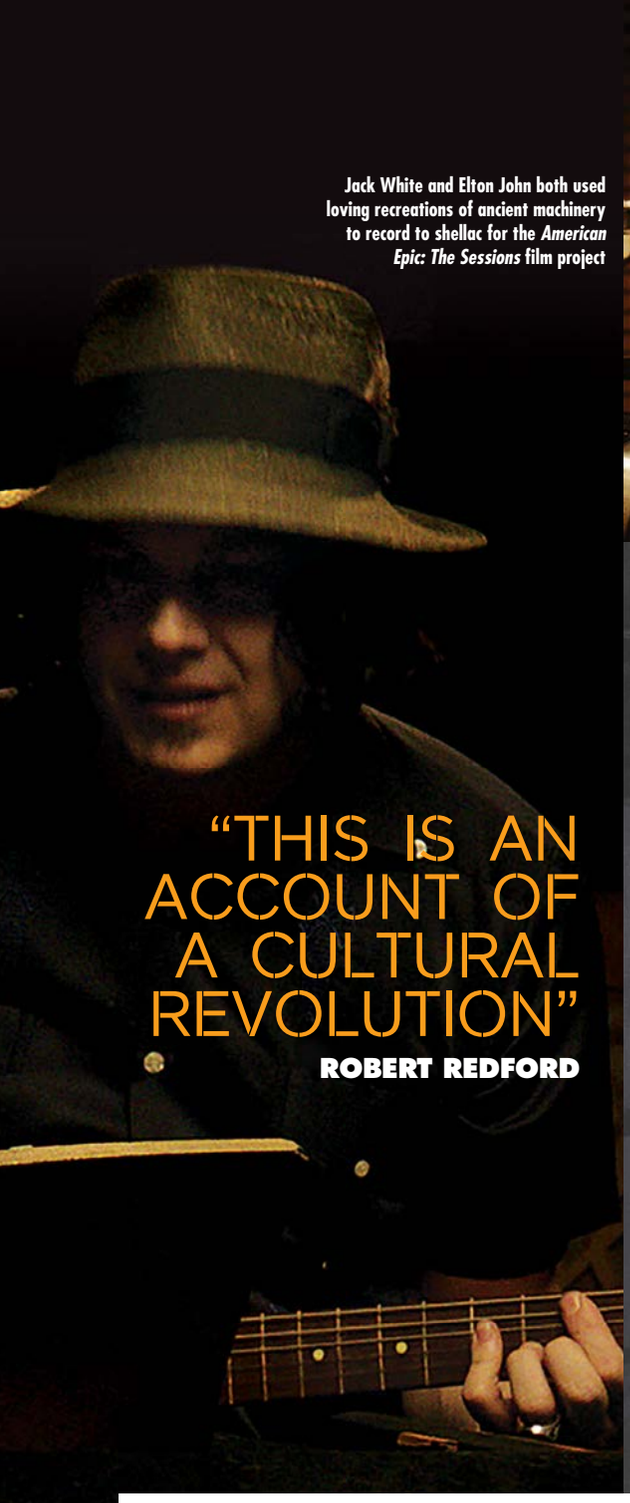
"What emerged," says MacMahon, "was that these artists were the real deal. 'Honeyboy' had met Charley Patton back in 1931. Homesick talked about seeing Blind Lemon Jefferson play in Texas, and Robert was a protégé of Robert Johnson no less, who was also his stepfather. What a history!

"Allison (McGourty), my production partner, saw this footage and said: 'This is great… We need to make this into something larger'. So we set out to make a series that celebrated the pioneers and artists of American roots music – encompassing the blues, gospel, folk, Cajun, Appalachian, Hawaiian, and Native American – without which there would be no rock, country, R&B or hip-hop today.

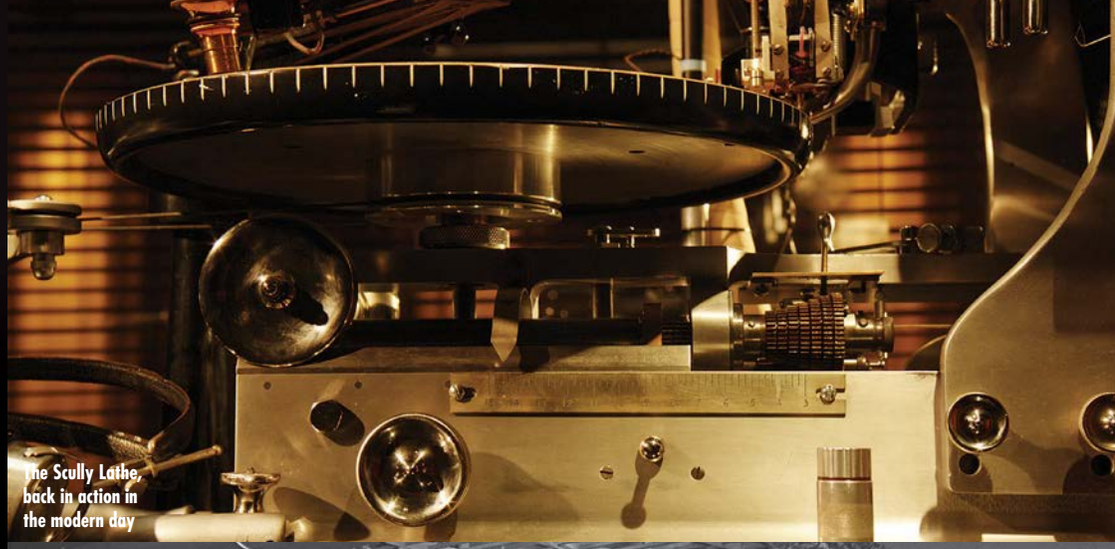
"But we had a big logistical problem: there was so little information on this era, and very little was known about many of the artists. On the recording side, there were old shellac discs, but no pictures of the recording equipment used to make them. I was aware of this huge historical musical jigsaw puzzle, but we only had a few pieces of that jigsaw."

At this point, McGourty joins the conversation. "In the early years, we weren't working on the project full-time, and, instead of having holidays, we were both going back and forth to America whenever we could, to do our research."

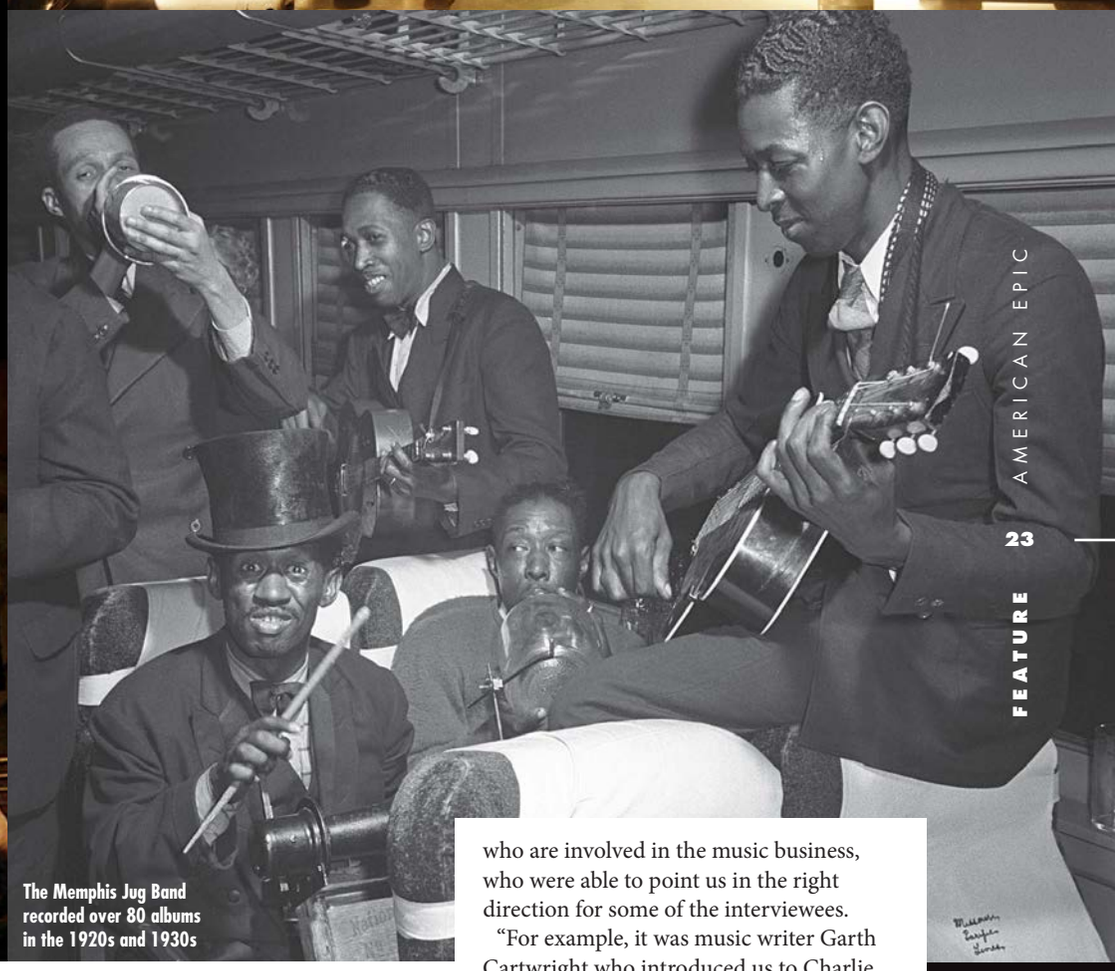
The project became full-time in 2011, after McGourty set up a meeting with Jeff Rosen, Bob Dylan's manager and a lover of



Jack White and Elton John both used loving recreations of ancient machinery to record to shellac for the *American Epic: The Sessions* film project



The Scully Lathe, back in action in the modern day



The Memphis Jug Band recorded over 80 albums in the 1920s and 1930s

"THIS IS AN ACCOUNT OF A CULTURAL REVOLUTION"

ROBERT REDFORD

old-time music. Rosen was excited by what he heard, and became a guardian angel of the project, setting up, in turn, meetings with the BBC and with T Bone Burnett. Robert Redford came onboard as an executive producer soon after, proclaiming: "This is America's greatest untold story. It's an account of the cultural revolution that ultimately united a nation."

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

MacMahon remembers how T Bone also connected the pair up with "other great roots-loving musicians, like Jack White and Elton John. Elton said to us: 'T Bone has been talking about this. And if you're happy to work with an old queen, then I would like to contribute something musically, as well!'"

To their delight, the series was commissioned by Anthony Wall, executive producer at the BBC, and the man responsible for backing Scorsese's celebrated Bob Dylan documentary, *No Direction Home*. But although they were off and running, the really hard work was just beginning. McGourty recalls: "We must have travelled a quarter-of-a-million miles by air and driven at least 10,000 miles across the USA in our quest."

Nevertheless, despite meticulous planning, tracking down surviving family members of those early great musical pioneers was often like trying to find a needle in a haystack. "We couldn't simply Google them," says MacMahon. "But we doggedly persevered."

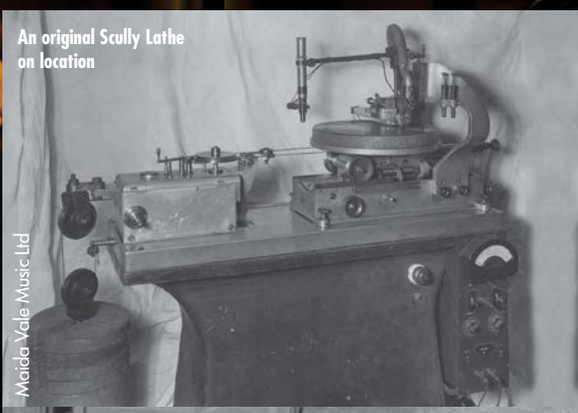
McGourty chips in: "Luckily, our job was made a little easier, as we have lots of friends who are involved in the music business, who were able to point us in the right direction for some of the interviewees.

"For example, it was music writer Garth Cartwright who introduced us to Charlie Musselwhite, the electric-blues harmonica player and bandleader; and John Tefteller, who introduced us to a lot of the 78 collectors for the music. Mostly, though, it was just old-fashioned detective work – from scanning ancient microfiches in dusty libraries to phoning funeral parlours and even, in one case, hiring a private detective.

"Fortunately," she continues, "in most cases, people were happy to talk to us. I think it helped that I'm a Scot and Bernard's of Irish descent. Everyone loves talking to the British. "In almost every case, people were hugely intrigued by what we were trying to do," adds MacMahon, "and then very emotional and delighted that their musically pioneering ancestors were at long last getting recognition."

Maida Vale Music Ltd

Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson recording for *American Epic: The Sessions*


Maida Vale Music Ltd

An original Scully Lathe on location

The Carter Family, literally in the field

In the end, there was enough footage for at least 15 episodes. But that was impractical, and so MacMahon scaled the final series down to five-and-a-half hours of edited film, culminating in a rich, but tight, four-part presentation.

American Epic is, however, just as much about the birth of the modern recording industry, when electric recording took off.

The documentary's creators set out to follow the paths of the early record company scouts, who – because of the competition from radio – were sent out across America in the 1920s in search of new styles of music and new markets to sell it in.

McGourty definitely agrees that there's something heroic about those early record producers who went out into the field to capture the vast array of native and rural American musical talent in the raw. "If it wasn't for those pioneering producers in the field, like Ralph Peer and Frank Walker, we wouldn't have the music we have today. They are the pioneers, who – using their early electric recording machine, their cutting lathe, and mastery of microphone technique and where to place the mic to get the best musical results – shaped our world. Those American roots musicians were recorded right there and then, straight onto shellac, the early, brittle forerunner of vinyl. Often, they were recorded in one take, and that often resulted in wonderfully pure, unadulterated performances. Or 'lightning in a bottle', as Bernard likes to say. Furthermore, the records were sold locally to music lovers with wind-up gramophones."

So, does McGourty suspect that these early performances will transfer better to vinyl – and sound better on vinyl than on CD? "Vinyl will always generally sound better than CD. What makes our music from the *American Epic* collection and the series so special is that, after a decade of research, we came up with the ultimate way to restore the sound from these vintage shellac 78 discs."

Nick Bergh – *American Epic*'s brilliant sound supervisor and recording engineer – came onboard about three months before the first test-session recording shown in the film. Although he didn't accompany the shoot, he was clearly a busy man. "My role," he says, "was threefold: transferring all the vintage recordings, recording the new musicians using the old equipment, and general sound supervision – to help ensure authenticity of the original sound for the songs and instrumentals featured in the released recordings."

Taj Mahal performs for the *American Epic: The Sessions* film

THESE OFTEN ONE-TAKE FIELD RECORDINGS CAPTURED 'LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE'

AN EPIC RESTORATION

Bergh, MacMahon and McGourty soon realised that if they were going to authentically record contemporary musicians, they would have to find or rebuild a real Western Electric recording rack. And since there was not one to be found anywhere in the world, the only option was a rebuild. This was a hugely painstaking, but ultimately rewarding task, as Bergh explains.

"My goal was to somehow locate – anywhere in the USA or the world – each of the main components of a Western Electric, get them working on their own, and then integrate them back into a complete system. Sort of like the restoration of an extremely rare classic car, where maybe the body, the motor, rear-end and transmission all come from different places.

"However, in the case of the Western Electric system, the components are: microphone, microphone pre-amp, equaliser, line amp, monitor amp, level meter and (the Scully Lathe) cutting head."

In the feature-length companion film *American Epic: The Sessions*, Bergh has a chance to take a Western Electric recording machine and Scully Lathe into a studio and use them to record, produce and cut shellac records of performances by a whole host of contemporary artists, including Elton John, Willie Nelson, Jack White, Beck, the rapper Nas, and Taj Mahal. We wonder what the logistical challenges of doing this were. "The gear is very old and can be troublesome," Bergh explains. "There are also many pieces, and beyond the parts seen in the film are all the spares, like mechanical-electrical tools, and special oils and greases. Having said that, the equipment held up very well."

We put it to Bergh that it must have been difficult getting these contemporary artists to feel comfortable with such wonderful yet old-time recording technology. "To their credit, I think the musicians got into it fairly quickly. I actually had my hands so full on the technical side that we left it to Jack White and others to help on the performance side."

As an engineer first and foremost, it's no surprise to hear what Nick Bergh's highlight was. "It's amazing to see something that I used to study in old grainy photos actually shown onscreen. It's almost unbelievable that it could be put back together and used. I hope it helps foster interest in this early era of recording, and the importance of understanding the technology when trying to understand the recorded music of now."

From old, hissy shellac tracks to digital versions, through audio restoration and then, finally, to high-quality vinyl/CD tracks is quite a journey. And the main man responsible for the final, sensitively cleaned-up versions of the music heard on the boxsets is Grammy Award-winning record producer Peter Henderson.

When quizzed about her longer-term hopes for how *American Epic* is received, Allison McGourty is resolutely clear what she, MacMahon and the broadcasters involved (the BBC and PBS) want to achieve. "I hope that *American Epic* will instill in viewers a love for the songs that came out of America and for the people who made the music. Furthermore, we've always believed from the off that the show would only be a success if it appealed to both the cognoscenti and the general music lover. I hope we've succeeded in doing that!"

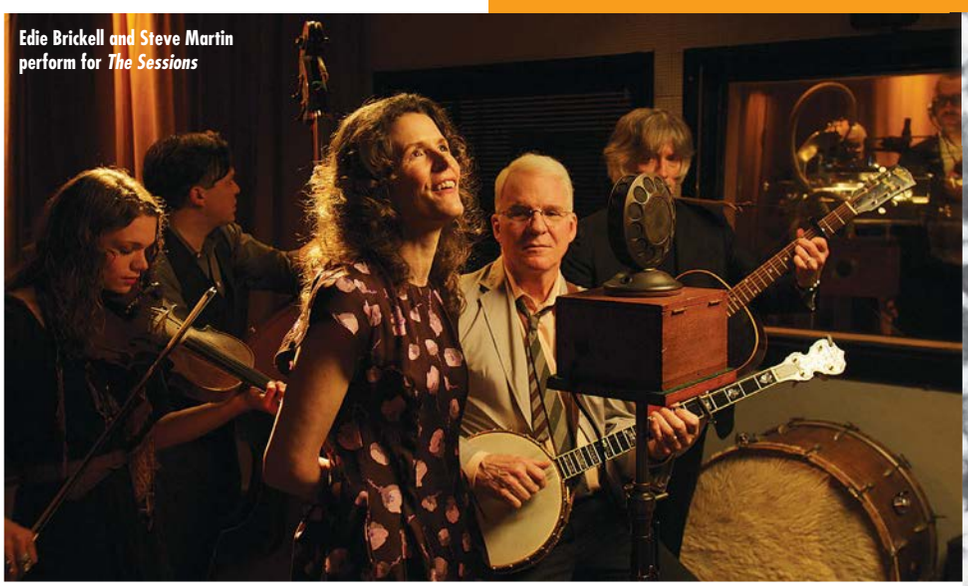
With wins and nominations already earned at various film festivals, including Calgary and Sydney, it's a safe bet *American Epic* is going to carve a niche in the pantheon of TV's great documentaries; while the accompanying vinyl releases on Third Man look set to further cement the accolades. ●

A WORD FROM JACK WHITE

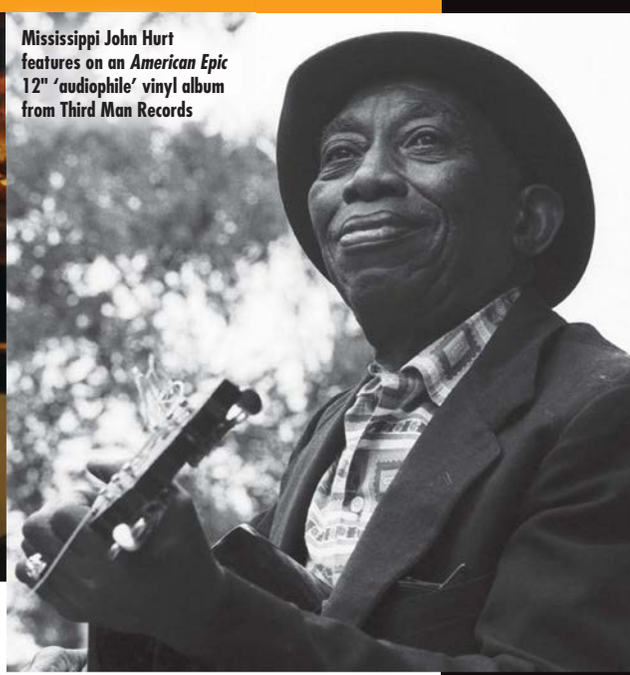
The Third Man supremo extols the virtues of analogue

"I think a lot of us who've loved music recorded in… the 20s and 30s always wondered what it would be like if we could record our songs in this way. It really does change your perspective. I love the look on people's faces when they first hear the playback from the record…

"It's strange at first, because it doesn't sound like a digital recording… there's frequencies that aren't there for modern recording, and you're dealing with hearing the vibrations out of a mechanical object, not the digital ones and twos of computer recording, or even a tape recording. This is an actual physical, mechanical means by which you are reproducing the sound, and that colours the sound in a beautiful way. It really has its own life."



Edie Brickell and Steve Martin perform for *The Sessions*



Mississippi John Hurt features on an *American Epic* 12" 'audiophile' vinyl album from Third Man Records

***American Epic* runs for three weeks from 21 May on BBC Four and can be found on iPlayer. The companion book is published by Touchstone and available from all good bookshops. *American Epic* vinyl compilations will be released via Third Man Records.**

SUPER SUNDAYS

What started as a small gathering of music-loving friends has grown to become an expansive worldwide network of unique listening events. *Laura K Williams* talks to Classic Album Sundays founder **Colleen Murphy**…

It was a chance encounter in the school playground that led to Colleen Murphy launching her first Classic Album Sundays event in London in 2010, and seven years later she's presided over events at UK festivals, in seven US cities, in Japan and Australia and all over Europe – with a collaboration with the Royal Albert Hall in the pipeline.

The radio DJ had held a few low-key listening events for friends at her London home, playing records on her sound system (a modified Technics 1100 with Koetsu tonearm and Rosewood Signature Moving Coil Cartridge, Mark Levinson ML-1 preamp, Quad monoblock amps and Klipschorn Loudspeakers).

"I have a hi-fi and 10,000 records and we would sit and listen to a record, and it was our Classic Album Sunday," Colleen tells us. "Friends would say I should do something like this as a proper event."

A DJ friend, Greg Wilson, had a blog called *Living To Music*, which encouraged people to listen to a particular album, and he'd write about it and then people would talk about it. It got Colleen thinking: "One night, I was listening to *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and just thought, 'Let's just do this, as a labour of love, give others the chance to experience an album in this way'.

"I was in the playground picking up my daughter and I got chatting to a family I know, who are Irish and own pubs. I told them about the idea and they said they were really into it."

One of the pubs, The Hanbury Arms in Islington, included a wooden-clad function room where the acoustics were quite good, so it was there that Colleen unleashed her Classic Album Sundays on the world – and she hasn't stopped since. She says: "We would rent a van, bring my hi-fi, speakers and valve amplifier. My husband would come and we had to get a sitter, and we just lost money, basically – not enough to not want to do it, though."

Within months of the launch, the concept had been picked up by the media – first Kate Mossman at *Word* magazine, then the BBC and the music and mainstream press. "I didn't realise what the impact was going to be at first," says Colleen, a journalist by trade. "It put it on the map. It was the first audiophile listening experience out there and ticked a lot of boxes around music format, music equipment, listening to an album in full, shuffle culture, artists' intentions…"

Classic Album Sundays supremo Colleen Murphy surrounded by some of her 10,000 records

AN INTIMATE SHOWCASE

At its heart, Classic Album Sundays is listening to a great album, in a great space, with great kit, surrounded by a great community of music lovers – intimate listening events with a 'living room atmosphere'. Thanks to her existing network of music lovers across the globe, Colleen's helped to launch events in a dizzying array of different locations, with more in the pipeline. She says: "It just kind of amalgamated my entire career – with writing, with radio, with record shops, with DJing, running events and running a record label. When I look back on it, it all makes sense."

The concept of Classic Album Sundays draws upon Colleen's unrelenting love of music and the knowledge and experience she'd picked up working in record shops in New England, New York and London (including Strawberries, which was owned by notorious music mogul and gangster Morris Levy), and in over a quarter of a century working in radio. Raised in the suburbs of Boston in the 70s and 80s, Colleen grew up listening to records on a hand-me-down GE Trimline given to her by her dad, and has gone on to develop a huge record collection and impressive selection of sound equipment.

She said: "After a year or two of raiding my uncle's record collection, I started collecting vinyl seriously when I was 15, and my first job was in a record shop when I was 16, so I was completely obsessive. Basically, I started like all girls did in 1974 – behind the cash register, behind the till and they were like, 'Actually, you know a lot about music', so they put me out on the floor with the guys selling. I worked my way up to assistant manager, but we had to lie, because I was still 17. I learnt a lot about music when I was there. If you work in a record shop, you don't work there for the money, you work there because you love music. Everyone was obsessive about their tastes and I was just a sponge, like I still am.

"Record shops are amazing places to learn about music, because even customers turn you on to stuff. I do shop on Discogs because I know what I want, but you have to go into record shops to get stuff you don't know that you want, if you know what I mean?"

Colleen's shelves house an ever-changing collection, which includes multiple copies of the same classic albums – some of which are destined for record dealers, and others for her almost-teenage daughter.

Classic Album Sundays deliberately tries not to wed itself to one genre or one demographic – not in a contrived

CLASSIC ALBUM SUNDAYS IS LISTENING TO A GREAT ALBUM, IN A GREAT SPACE, WITH GREAT KIT

Recent Classic Albums events have taken place in Chicago, Berlin, Tokyo and Brussels

Avantgarde Acoustic's horn loudspeakers at the Berlin event

way, but because Colleen's tastes are so genuinely varied. We start the conversation talking about Britpop bands and move on to the 60s British Invasion via rave culture, grunge and Latin music.

"I really wanted to make sure it wasn't just one of these retro 70s album things," says Colleen. "My tastes do span a lot and I also know what is important in various fields.

"I try to tick a lot of boxes. First of all, I make sure that both genders are represented, that's kind of important to me. Then the style of music could be pop to classic rock to something more proggy to hip-hop to soul, jazz, something kind of folky. I also try to represent different eras – 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s – making sure it's expansive and all-encompassing."

This approach has led to an amazing selection of records featuring in Classic Album Sundays, from *Off The Wall* by Michael Jackson to *Ege Bamyasi* by Can; *The Chronic* by Dr. Dre to *Autobahn* by Kraftwerk and *A Love Supreme* by John Coltrane to *Homogenic* by Björk.

"People make assumptions that it must be a lot of guys in their 40s, 50s and 60s sitting around," says Colleen, who attends most of the London events, as well as some further afield. "And, yeah, there are certain albums that do attract that audience, like Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, but then you do Kate Bush and you'll have a lot of women and gay guys. It just differs."

The latest stats reveal that women make up almost half of the Classic Album Sundays audience, with the majority of attendees under the age of 45. "I like the fact that it appeals to so many different kinds of people," says Colleen, who is one of the 10 to 15 per cent of the Classic Album Sundays community over the age of 45. "That's massively important to me, because I don't want it to be elitist, I'm very much into social progress. It's about creating a great experience – a musical experience, an emotional experience but also an educational experience.

"I didn't want it to be like, you come in, listen to the record and leave, but more like, 'Hey, come in,

have some pizza, have some beer, I'm going to play some music while you guys chat'. When the main record is played, the room usually falls silent. As my mum always said, 'If you're talking, you're not listening'. We've seen people transformed. We get a fair few tears, with Kate Bush, Joni Mitchell and *Wish You Were Here*, where one woman had to leave. And there are also ones where you laugh, like Beastie Boys; and others where you're like, 'Oh my gosh, I didn't realise the sonics were so amazing on this', like *Mezzanine.*"

THIS IS THE KIT

Thanks to the quality of the equipment used at Classic Album Sundays (the London event uses a Rega P9 with a Dynavector D17D3 moving coil cartridge, Rega IOS Reference Phono Stage, Audio Note UK Jinro amplifier, Chord Signature speaker cable, Klipschorn Loudspeakers and Klipsch SW-115 subs), people hear things they've never noticed. "It's about experiencing an album in the way you haven't done before," says Colleen. "With the musical context, with the story behind it and sonically in more detail. As close as you can get to the artist's intention. And sometimes, now we have the artists and producers there – we interview them beforehand, so people can get even closer to it."

Colleen has purged around 10,000 records from her 10,000-strong collection over the years, always in search of the best pressing for the best listening experience. "Vinyl *can* be a superior listening experience," she says. "When you have an album that has been mixed properly, mastered properly, pressed properly, and then you're listening to it on great equipment that is the highest standard – for me, it's magical.

"I can listen to my great original pressing of Jeff Buckley *Grace* and the vinyl album is always superior to the CD album," [bear in mind Colleen is listening on her Nottingham Analogue Ace Spacedeck with the Koetsu tonearm and Rosewood Signature moving coil cartridge, through a Mark Levinson ML-1 preamp, powered by an Audio Note UK Conqueror Silver Signature valve amp, through the Chord Signature speaker cable to the Klipschorn loudspeakers – Geek Ed].

As much as Colleen loves her contemporary sound kit, she's a huge advocate for vintage equipment, too, revealing her 25-year-old Bozak DJ mixer remains a prized possession. "This Bozak was one of the first ever and I've just had it reconditioned twice, recapped and everything, and nothing compares – there isn't a better DJ mixer. These are workhorses. Obviously, you have to get in a position to be able to buy it in the first place, but if you go slowly and buy used stuff, you can do it pretty economically. The cheap stuff is made to break after a few years, it's not environmentally friendly; what worries me more is cheap turntables can wreck your records, causing permanent damage to the vinyl."

Colleen concedes that there are two sides to the music listening experience now – the digital side and the analogue side. She believes the online experience and digital music have an important role to play, dubbing the Classic Album Sundays website "a hub for classic albums and high-end audio and vinyl". Spotify playlists accompany each event, featuring music to help tell the story of that album. They cover a range of topics – it could be the artist's earlier work, the musical landscape at the time or music that influenced that artist. This music is also played at the Classic Album Sundays events and features in Colleen's Album Of The Month show, streamed online via Worldwide FM.

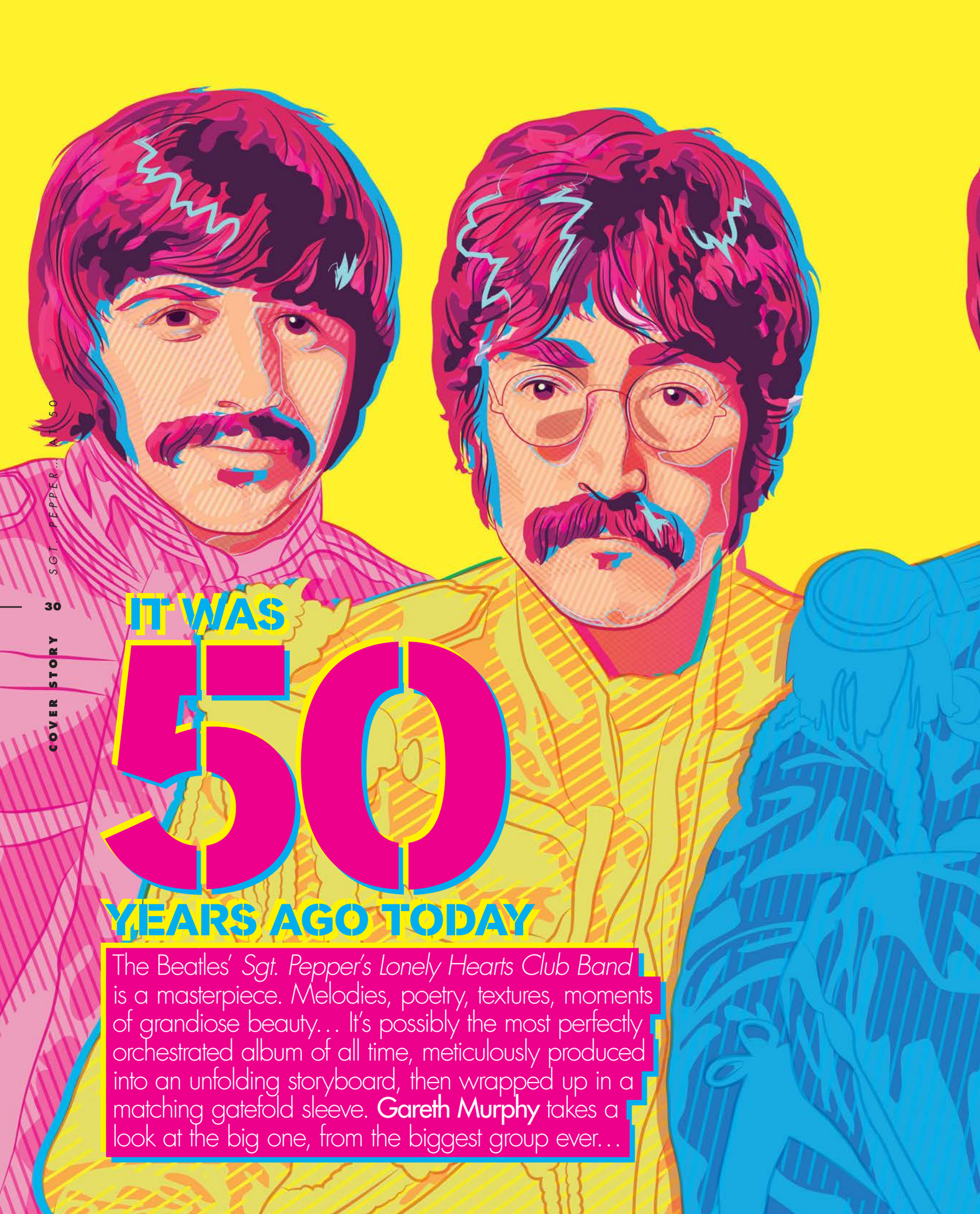
Colleen adds: "Overall, I can see why vinyl is growing again and I'm so behind that. I never stopped buying records. As a DJ, I play records on vinyl. It never went away from me. It's not like I got everything on CD and then had to start buying it again on vinyl." ●

> "I DON'T WANT THE EVENT TO BE ELITIST, I'M VERY MUCH INTO SOCIAL PROGRESS"

CAS presenting Jarvis Cocker at the John Peel Centre For Creative Arts in Stowmarket

2016/17 ALBUMS OF THE MONTH

Lauryn Hill The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill
The Velvet Underground & Nico The Velvet Underground & Nico
John Coltrane A Love Supreme
Van Morrison Astral Weeks
D'Angelo Voodoo
My Bloody Valentine Loveless
Billie Holiday Lady In Satin
Stevie Wonder Songs In The Key Of Life
Daft Punk Discovery
Massive Attack Mezzanine
The Smiths The Queen Is Dead
The Beach Boys Pet Sounds



IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO TODAY

The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is a masterpiece. Melodies, poetry, textures, moments of grandiose beauty… It's possibly the most perfectly orchestrated album of all time, meticulously produced into an unfolding storyboard, then wrapped up in a matching gatefold sleeve. **Gareth Murphy** takes a look at the big one, from the biggest group ever…

Context is everything. When *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released on 1 June, 1967, nothing like it had been heard or seen before. In hindsight, what came to be termed 'rock' probably began with earlier albums such as *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Pet Sounds*, *The Doors*, *Fresh Cream*, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, even *Revolver*. But there's little disagreement that for the two-and-a-half million people who ran out and bought a copy of *Sgt. Pepper…* in the summer of 1967, it was the sonic detonation that blew a giant hole through the flat world of mono pop. Its effect was immediate, widespread and experienced as a major event. Of its first broadcast on radio, Roger Waters never forgets "pulling the car over into a lay-by, and we sat and listened… in this old beat-up Zephyr, just completely stunned."

Having taken 400 hours of studio time over 129 days, it was certainly a record-breaking production intended to shock and awe. And because Abbey Road's four-track equipment necessitated constant mixdowns to a second machine to free up tracks, Ringo found himself hanging around for so many lost hours, that it was *Sgt. Pepper…* who taught him how to play chess. It's a fitting symbol of how this milestone project transformed The Beatles from giddy young men into thoughtful, middle-aged individuals.

POP ART
Pepper... also has arguably the most iconic record sleeve in history – it was designed by Sir Peter Blake and Jann Haworth, and photographed by Michael Cooper, with input from The Beatles

To this day, *Sgt. Pepper...* remains the most common number-one choice of greatest albums of all time, a status unlikely to be challenged in our lives. Its legacy as a monument of British pop was formalised on its 20th anniversary, when the BBC and PBS aired *It Was 20 Years Ago Today*, the first landmark documentary about its making. With John Lennon dead and old wounds still sensitive, its estranged survivors stuck to the facts of the actual studio work, largely overlooking the background personal stories which, I think, better explain why such an intense energy was brewing in the first place. For we credit this record to The Beatles, but there's a reason why Ringo was playing so much chess in the canteen, and why there's so little of George Harrison's guitar. And this particular story – the somewhat embarrassing one about credits, money, drugs, egos and revisionism – has taken a long time to fully emerge.

To see this album the right way around, the first thing to remove is Paul McCartney's whole 'Sgt. Pepper' concept. The album's highest points, *A Day In The Life*, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds* and *Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!*, came from a nameless winter between December 1966 and February 1967. This was when they also produced *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* – which didn't appear on the final album. *Strawberry Fields Forever* was the sketch that inspired the whole series.

Like most masterpieces, this album grew from a dark and confused place. Throughout the second half of 1966, John Lennon had slid into a full-blown depression that he hid even from his wife. His worsening drug habit can't have been helping, but it had been a rotten summer for The Beatles – their existential crisis following four Fab-ulous years in which they clocked up seven albums, 12 US No. 1s, two films and about 800 live performances. According to Cynthia

Lennon, John had spent the whole jangly period between *Help!* and *Revolver* staying up all night smoking dope and listening to Bob Dylan. But in May 1966, shortly after the completion of *Revolver*, legend has it that Dylan played a freshly pressed copy of *Blonde On Blonde* in Lennon's living room. Dylan presented *4th Time Around*, which Lennon rightly understood as a cruel skit not just of *Norwegian Wood*, but of himself. The sensitive Beatle never got over being laughed at by his idol.

HERE, THERE AND ANYWHERE

Then, on tour in America, Lennon's "bigger than Jesus" comment provoked a storm of Christian outrage and vinyl bonfires. Sick of touring, sick of America, sick of screaming girls, sick of themselves, all four Beatles took a long-overdue sabbatical in the autumn of 1966. George Harrison went to India and John Lennon disappeared to southern Spain for the filming of *How I Won The War*. It was in this lost period that lines such as "It's getting hard to be someone" began forming around images of an old park in Liverpool. Crippling self doubt had reawakened John Lennon's haunted childhood – his motherless, fatherless and largely loveless beginnings. Further compounding his isolation, Lennon was living out in Weybridge, Surrey. Bored in his marriage and a dysfunctional father to three-year-old Julian, he began hanging around the house, self-medicating his depression with uppers, downers and outer-spacers.

They were all feeling the hangover. Brian Epstein was battling his own pill addiction and had seemingly become so convinced Beatlemania had crashed, he merged his management agency with the operation of Robert Stigwood, the manager behind the Bee Gees and Cream. Epstein hadn't told The Beatles yet, but he'd at least managed to renegotiate their embarrassing record deal with EMI. For the next round of recordings, The Beatles were set to get 10 per cent of wholesale price.

When The Beatles convened at Abbey Road in late 1966, a BBC film crew captured their burnt-out state. "I've just been sitting around… getting fat," confessed the candid Ringo. George angrily pushed through their microphones, while John looked 10 years older. In those sessions – their first in nine months – they recorded a series of, by their own lofty standards, rather shabby jams.

WHEN THE BAND MET AT ABBEY ROAD IN LATE '66, A FILM CREW CAPTURED THEIR BURNT-OUT STATE

Getty

The band in writing mode, in session at Abbey Road in '67

© Apple Corps Ltd

However, George Martin orchestrated, time-shifted and reassembled two different experiments into *Strawberry Fields Forever*, a veritable eureka moment for everyone – particularly its chief architects, Lennon and Martin.

Although *Penny Lane* has since been immortalised in Beatles memory as its natural twin, McCartney was actually recording *When I'm Sixty-Four* while *Strawberry Fields* was gestating. That's how far apart the two songwriters had grown. "We couldn't relate to [Paul and Ringo] anymore," admitted George Harrison years later. "Not just on the one level – we couldn't relate to them on any level, because acid had changed us so much… I had such an overwhelming feeling of well-being, that there was a God, and I could see him in every blade of grass. It was like gaining hundreds of years of experience in 12 hours." Ringo agreed to try, but by the filming of the video for *Strawberry Fields Forever*, Paul still hadn't experienced an LSD trip. He was also the only unmarried Beatle still living in London – in fact, just around the corner from Abbey Road.

The intense public pressure for a Beatles comeback is why *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *Penny Lane* were rushed out in

February as a double A-side 7", by which stage, work had already started on *A Day In The Life*. The warmly received single succeeded in raising morale, but of course, both tracks couldn't appear on the future album. George Martin long regretted they hadn't resisted the EMI managers, but it's debatable whether the producer had any real executive power at that point.

For the venerable old gentleman we now think of as Sir George Martin is an important case in point. He was a very different person in real life, especially at that juncture. Despite his 'old boy' airs, he'd actually been born into a poorer family than any of The Beatles. As a child, his family's one-room flat had no toilet or sink. But thanks to scholarships, air-force training, other people's pianos, and the help of patrons and student grants, George Martin was a self-made prodigy who graduated from the prestigious Guildhall School Of Music before joining EMI in 1950. He'd signed The Beatles in 1962 and by 1964, they were generating millions for EMI and its Capitol subsidiary. Insultingly, and probably because he was of a lower social class, EMI continued to pay George Martin only £3,000 per annum: until, in 1965, following a series of heated arguments, he slammed the door on EMI and struck a new deal with Brian Epstein to work with The Beatles as a freelance producer.

George Martin experienced the entire Beatles adventure in a perilous financial state. And he didn't really get along with The Beatles on a personal level – they found him old and quite stuffy. His only true friend and ally had been Brian Epstein. Aged 41 when *Sgt. Pepper…* began, George Martin knew Epstein was losing control and simply maintained his 'schoolmaster' distance from the musicians. Like naughty boys, they'd sneak off to the canteen for their joints, but Martin knew they needed an authority to keep the work serious. "If I, too, had been on dope," he mused, "*Pepper…* would never have been the album that it was. Perhaps it was the combination of dope and no dope that worked."

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The Beatles, as a unit, hard at work during the *…Pepper* sessions

PAINTING WITH SOUND

What is certain is that George Martin knew The Beatles' limitations better than they knew his hidden talents. Since 1963, they'd developed a work method of presenting their new songs acoustically to him; he'd sit on a stool, listen carefully and give his verdict. His A&R powers had been gradually weakened as they became famous and he became their freelancer, but he still refused songs he felt weren't up to standard – particularly George Harrison's. He actually described the original *Within You Without You* as a "dreary" composition that only found its magic and picture sharpness thanks to an orchestral overhaul.

When it came to music, George Martin was a perfectionist who'd studied the classical masterpieces. Also, while producing comedy albums for the likes of Peter Sellers, he'd learned sampling and other tricks that he termed 'electronic music'. "Making a record is like painting a picture in sound," he wrote in his memoirs. "That may be why, of all painters, my favourites are the Impressionists – Renoir, Degas, Cézanne, Monet, Van Gogh, Sisley.

MARTIN KNEW THE BEATLES' LIMITATIONS BETTER THAN THEY KNEW HIS HIDDEN TALENTS

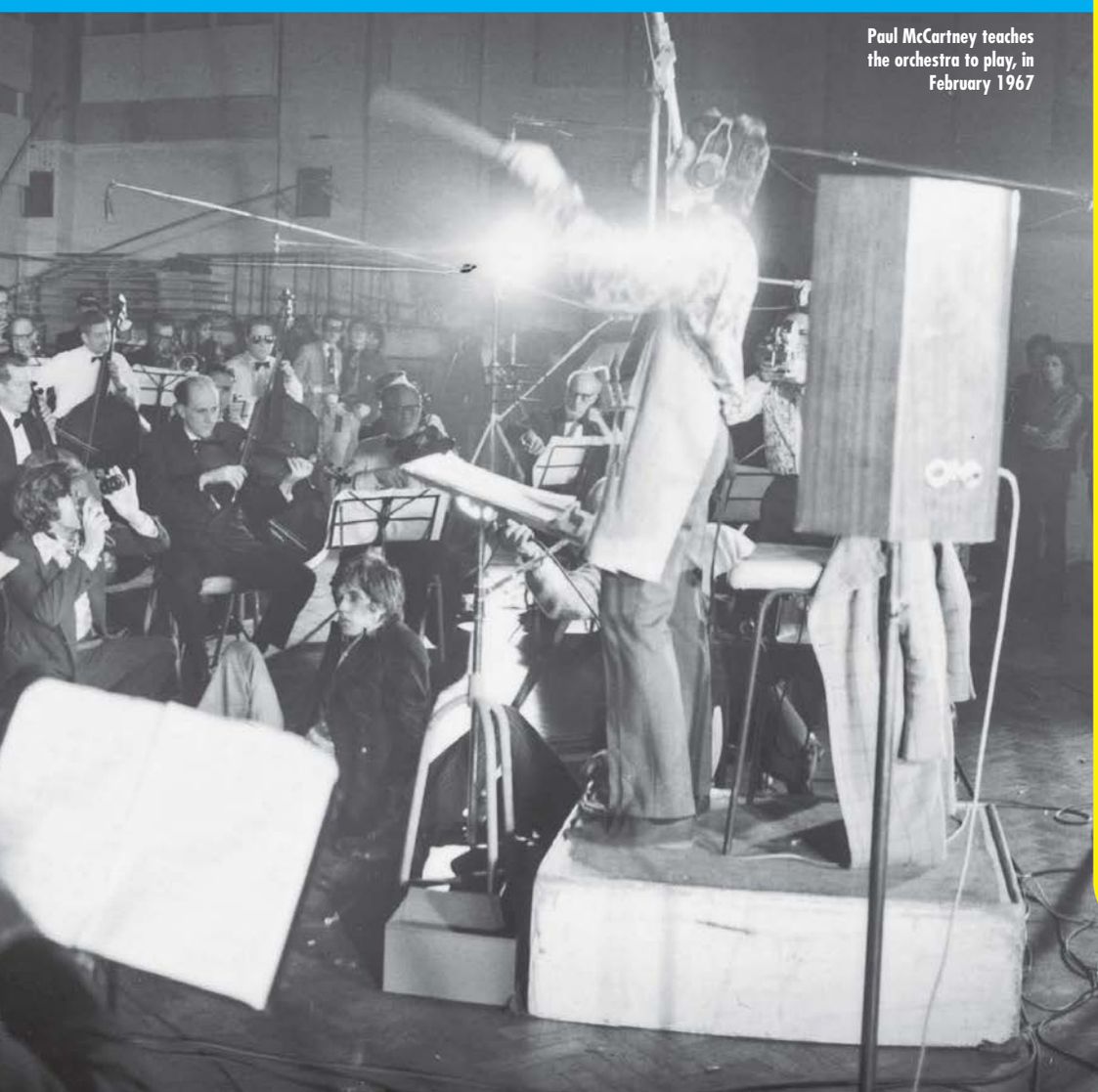
Getty

Getty

"It's surely no coincidence that they seem to match so well, almost as visual counterparts, the music of my favourite composers, Debussy and Ravel." So, when John Lennon started bringing in visual song ideas such as *Being For the Benefit Of Mr. Kite!* and *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, the older master was keen to up the ante. "John's imagery is one of the great things about his work – tangerine trees, marmalade skies, cellophane flowers… I always saw him as an aural Salvador Dali."

But it was *A Day In The Life* that quickly became the project's centrepiece. It began as a John Lennon folk song, to which Paul McCartney added his "Woke up, fell out of bed…" middle section. In between, they left a space of 24 bars that assistant Mal Evans counted. "For a joke, Mal set an alarm clock to go off at the end of 24 bars," recalled Martin. "We left it in because you couldn't get it off!" Although Paul McCartney has claimed the orchestral climax was his idea, Martin said it evolved from John's stoned babble. "Imagine a tremendous build-up," said the wide-eyed Lennon. "From nothing up to something absolutely like the end of the world. I'd like it to be from extreme quietness to extreme loudness, not only in volume, but also for the sound to expand as well. I'd like to use a symphony orchestra, and we'll get them in a studio and tell them what to do."

"C'mon John," interrupted the producer, "there's no way you can get a symphony orchestra sitting around and say to them, 'Look fellas, this is what you're going to do…' You've got to write something down for them." When Martin booked a 40-plus-piece orchestra, Paul McCartney demanded the musicians turn up to Abbey Road in tails and bow ties. The Beatles duly invited a bunch of friends to watch – Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Donavan and others trundled in, stoned, in their floral garb. As the bow-tied George Martin darted between the crowded studio and the control room, the youngsters began wandering around blowing bubbles and putting freakish masks on the classical musicians, some of whom were highly respected Philharmonic players. "The orchestra, of course, thought it was all a stupid waste of money," remembered Martin, "but I think they were carried into the spirit of the party just because it was so ludicrous." Working as conductor, George Martin told the cellos and violas to echo the final lingering word of John's vocal line: "I'd love to turn you on…" by just fingering the two notes that gradually gain in intensity. With this E chord gently stirring, the whole orchestra was to begin rising from its bottom positions. Martin had worked out the highest note each instrument could reach near a chord of E major, then drew a squiggly line right through the 24 bars, with reference points to indicate roughly what note they should be reaching during each bar. "I want everybody to be individual,"


Paul McCartney teaches the orchestra to play, in February 1967

STUDIO NOTES

GETTING WETTER
Engineer Geoff Emerick: "We'd send a feed from John's vocal mic into a mono tape machine and then tape the output… We used to turn up the record level until it started to slightly feed back on itself and gave this sort of twittery vocal sound." The resulting echo was recorded live with Lennon's vocal.

BRASS TRACKS
Good Morning Good Morning featured a brass track limited through a Fairchild 660 compressor/limiter and flanged (on the mono version).

A DI IN THE LIFE
During the *Pepper…* sessions, Paul's bass was recorded direct to the mixing desk (DI'd) for the first time on a Beatles recording. Lennon asked George Martin if he could 'DI' his vocal; "Yes, if you go and have an operation," Martin replied. "It means sticking a jackplug in your neck…"

HALF-SPEED MASTERS
Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!'s waltz section features additional tambourine, Paul on guitar, Lennon and George Martin on organs, all recorded with the tape machine running at half speed.

Getty

The brand-new Super Deluxe Edition (reviewed on page 102)

FOR THE FIRST AND LAST TIME, THREE STRONG VOICES COMPETED FOR RECOGNITION

Martin told his orchestra. "It's every man for himself. Don't listen to the fellow next to you. If he's a third away from you, let him go. Just do your own slide up, your own way." A total of four takes were overdubbed to create the now-legendary crescendo that's used twice. Its first appearance in the song is cut dead by chopping the tape exactly on the 24th bar, because, as Martin put it: "There is nothing more electrifying after a big sound than complete silence."

Throughout the entire project, and especially on John Lennon and George Harrison's tracks, George Martin invested hours and hours of post production to ensure their psychedelic madness was brightened and tightened into clockwork perfection. It was only somewhere in the middle, throughout February, that *Pet Sounds* by The Beach Boys became their sonic reference. Paul played it to the producer and, together, they studied its floaty spaces and sense of depth. This middle period, when most of the best material was already half-finished, was when Paul McCartney banged out a slew of sunnier pop songs such as *Fixing A Hole*, *Getting Better*, the *Sgt. Pepper…* title track and *Lovely Rita*.

With Brian Epstein depressed and falling out of favour, Paul's new house around the corner from Abbey Road was becoming the band's London HQ – a fact compounded by Paul's workaholism and belief he was the group's motivating force. In one instance of bounding over-exuberance, he rang up George Martin requesting an orchestration for a brand-new song he'd just written.

When the producer explained he had a recording date with Cilla Black the following day, McCartney ordered his assistant to find another arranger (Mike Leander). And so *She's Leaving Home* is the only *Sgt Pepper…* song to be arranged by someone other than George Martin – and you can hear it. Alas, Paul had no idea how much he'd broken George Martin's heart, but it's an indication of how The Beatles didn't really consider their producer an integral part of the enterprise in the way George Martin saw himself as their guardian angel.

PAUL OR NOTHING

Ultimately, what makes *Sgt. Pepper…* unique is that for the first and last time, there were three strong creative forces competing for recognition. John wrote the most interesting material, but Paul added several key ingredients that make *Sgt. Pepper…* such an intriguing sweet-and-sour dish. There's comedy, lightness and rhythm in McCartney's songs that make Lennon's weirder, more tragic contributions even more poignant. Paul's brilliant basslines and piano work keep the whole thing bubbling and modulating along. It was also McCartney who came up with most of the album's tricks: the idea of an alter-ego band and the way Ringo's character of Billy Shears is introduced and segued into *With A Little Help From My Friends*.

The Beatles at Abbey Road Studios for the historic *Our World* Live TV broadcast on 25 June 1967

David Magnus/REX/Shutterstock

Knowing they'd just pulled off something spectacular, they turned their attentions to the sleeve. On wise recommendation by Robert Fraser, Paul's art dealer, they ditched a commissioned painting by Dutch designer collective, The Fool. "In years to come, this will be just another psychedelic cover," Fraser told The Beatles before introducing them to pop artist Peter Blake. For the now-legendary group photograph, they borrowed wax models from Madame Tussauds and assembled cardboard cut-outs of their idols. It wasn't so much the marijuana plants – what worried EMI was more the threat of a furious Marlon Brando, or the notoriously litigious estates of dead celebrities. And so Epstein's staffers had to obtain written clearances for every face appearing on the sleeve. The fully packaged album featured, without exaggeration, a cast of hundreds. It even gave birth to the tradition of backwards hidden messages: a rumour spread that the surreal gobbledegook repeating in the play-out grooves of Side B, if spun backwards, said, "We'll fuck you like Superman!"

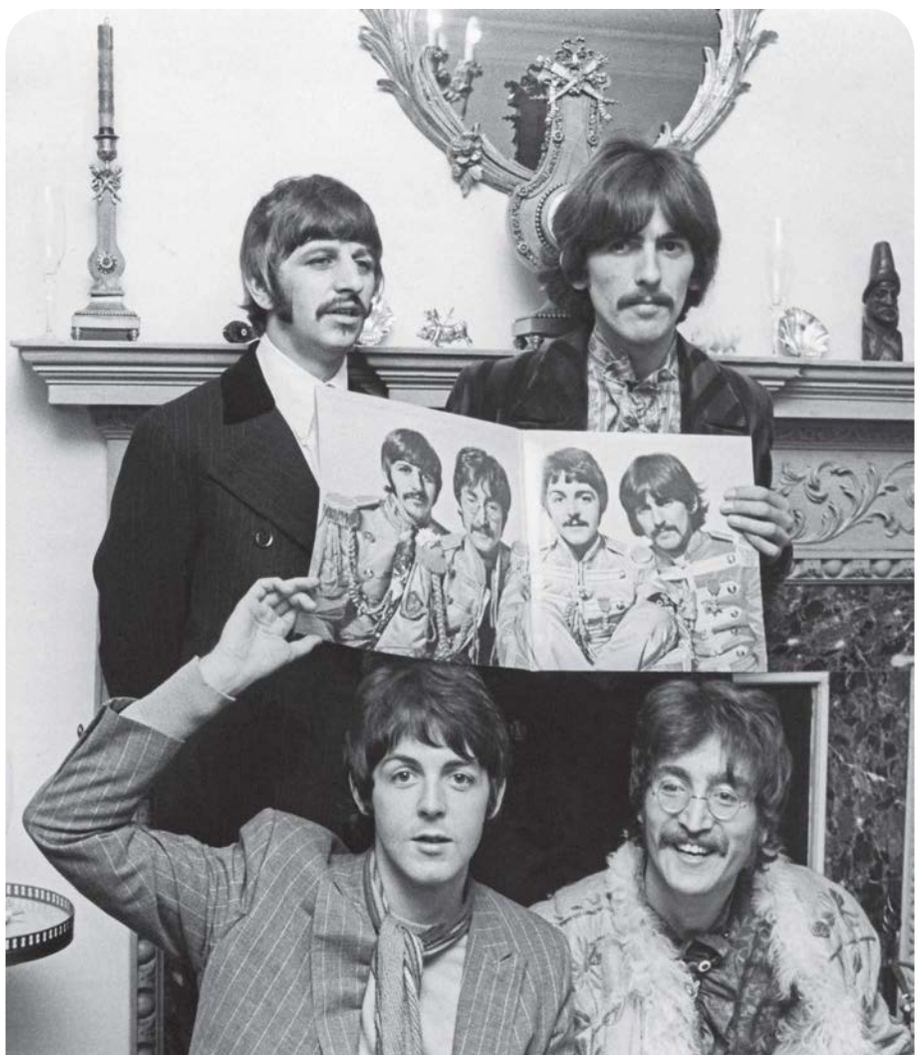
Even the floral arrangement depicting a guitar sparked another urban myth that 'Paul?' was secretly dead. But there were few question marks about the album's critical reception. Except for a few dissenting voices, the reaction around the world was largely superlative. The Beatles had nailed their masterpiece to the wall.

FULL SPEED AHEAD

The Beatles were back on top of the world. The only snag was that some journalists wanted to interview George Martin. "It's true to say they must depend on me a lot," replied the producer. "They know many things. But they don't know detail." All four Beatles began seething about George Martin's growing aura, at a time when their friends, The Rolling Stones, had just fired manager and producer, Andrew Loog Oldham. Independence was in the air. Paul appeared to be leading a mutiny to have Epstein sidelined, while John, George and Ringo yearned to get back to being a real band. To look into their bright future, the four Beatles, their wives and friends, hired a small ship and sailed around the Aegean, binging on a batch of super-powered acid that John smuggled in from San Francisco. With Paul now taking LSD and the idea for Apple already forming, they were on a meditation retreat later that summer when Brian Epstein died of a barbiturate overdose.

The beauty and the tragedy of *Sgt. Pepper…* is that it was their last great statement as a six-man collective – George Martin and Brian Epstein included. It stands out in The Beatles' catalogue because it captured their perfect ripeness before everything started to mellow and eventually rot. 50 years on, the question now is: has everything been said? I corresponded with George Martin before his death and felt how much it meant to him that posterity finally recognise his poor origins, his struggle and ultimately his miraculous destiny. His sense of mistreatment by EMI and even The Beatles themselves had gnawed straight into the very complex that also fired his muse.

So, the next time you play *Sgt. Pepper…*, listen to how all those genius orchestrations and counterpoints sing like a third voice. The Beatles wrote the songs, without which the magic couldn't have happened, and as such, George Martin's contribution should not be exaggerated, no more than it should be forgotten. It's a pop-art masterpiece because George Martin turned a series of pop sketches into something much bigger, richer and, ultimately, timeless.



Getty

Q WAS *SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND* THE BEATLES' DEFINING MASTERPIECE AND FINEST WORK? WE ASK TWO BEATLES EXPERTS...

YES

GARETH MURPHY
Cowboys & Indies author

Over a 50-year period, scores of Greatest Albums Of All Time listings cannot be wrong. Whether you personally like *Sgt. Pepper…* or not, time itself has passed its cold judgement and, by popular vote, declared it the Everest of pop albums.

The two most common criticisms levelled at *Sgt. Pepper…* are it's over-produced, and that other Beatles albums contain better songs. Sorry, but the project that gave us *A Day In The Life*, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, *Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!* and *Within You Without You* just cannot be dismissed as mutton dressed up as lamb. These are brilliant songs, done so beautifully they still sound subversive.

Paul McCartney's contributions wouldn't be my personal favourites, but *She's Leaving Home* is a well-crafted song given a heartbreaking twist by John Lennon's lines as the reflective parent. *Getting Better*, *Fixing A Hole* and the title track are all fine pop tunes – certainly not filler. Okay, the old-time vaudeville of *When I'm Sixty-Four* is arguably naff, but it was meant to be funny and, with George Martin's orchestration, it's a class above *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da* on 'The White Album'.

As a complete storyboard, *Sgt. Pepper…* is oozing with great melodies and powerful lyrics, and George Martin's arrangements are surely the best of any album, ever. And despite the accusations of over-production, everything is played by real people, with hardly any studio trickery – just good ideas and lots of manual work. It's only really the farmyard samples at the end of *Good Morning…* that, in my opinion, go overboard.

But that whole section, including the farewell reprise of the title track, intentionally creates a raucous comical sequence that tees up the album's masterpiece: *A Day In The Life*.

Without those five minutes of noisy silliness, the suddenly sparse gravity of John Lennon's "I read the news today, oh boy," would not penetrate in the way that it does.

The Beatles left behind a trail of brilliant works, but line them up and, objectively, *Sgt. Pepper…* stands out as The Beatles at their creative peak. In early 1967, they'd grown up, but were still playing together as a gang. The way the opening track tees up Ringo's stage entrance as Billy Shears and evolves into *With A Little Help From My Friends* is surely the loveliest example of Beatles camaraderie anywhere, films included. It's arguably the best Ringo number – a telling symbol, I think.

OBJECTIVELY, SGT. PEPPER... STANDS OUT AS THE BEATLES AT THEIR CREATIVE PEAK

FULL ENGLISH

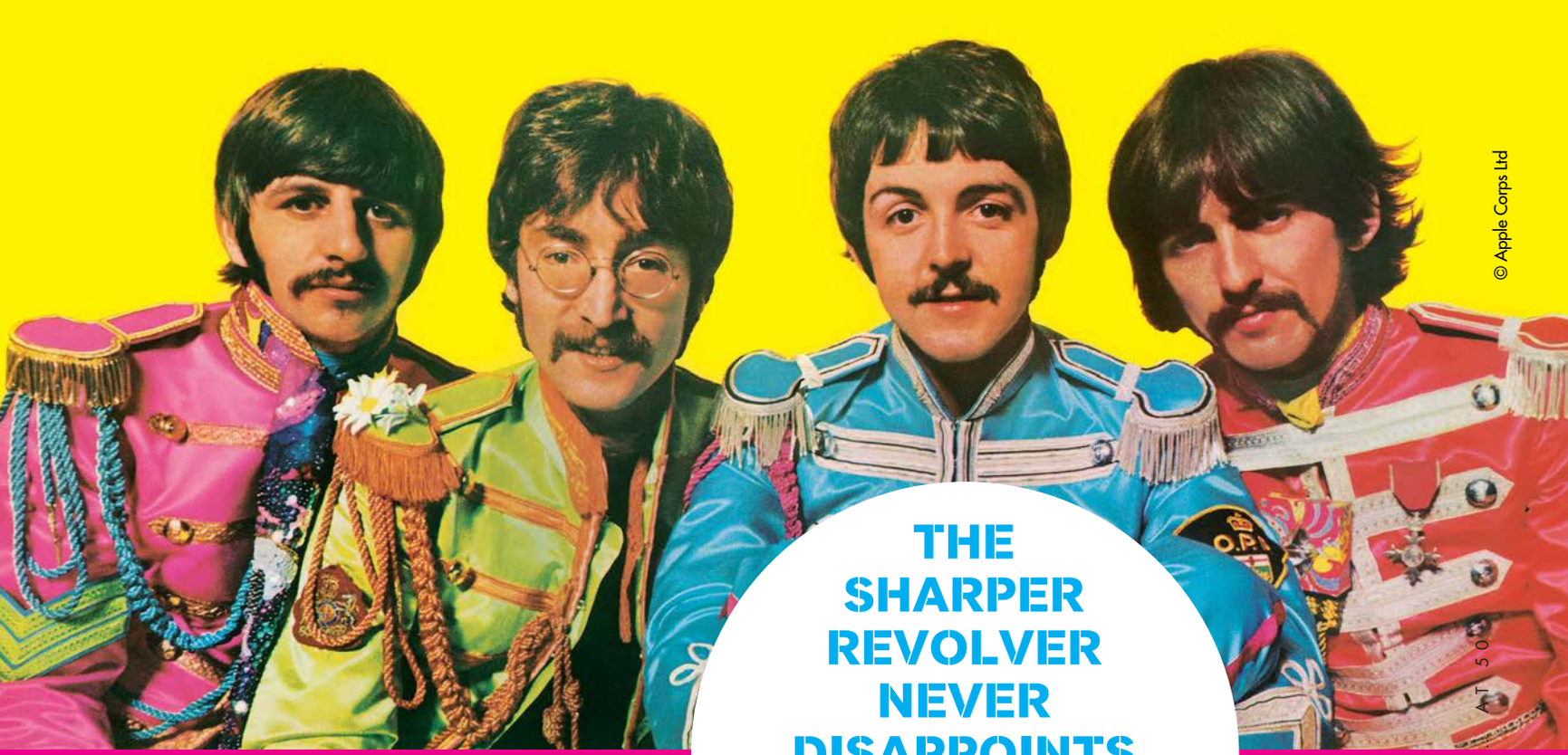
The third track, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*, takes things to a whole other level. In early 1967, the drugs were still opening their minds, there's a sense of imaginations flowering – the chemical experimentation has not yet turned to the impending doom that seeps through their latter records. This brief mix of fertility and team spirit on *Sgt. Pepper…* explains why it's their most distinctive-sounding album. Their interest in suburban portraits started the previous year with *Eleanor Rigby* and continued with *Strawberry Fields* and *Penny Lane*, but *Sgt. Pepper…* is by far their most full-flavoured English album. It's self-confident, oozing with references and totally unconcerned by America.

At the end of the day, the correct answer to the given question boils down to definitions. We're not debating which Beatles record has the best songs – in which case, it would be their *Greatest Hits*. In the specific category of albums – pop albums – *Sgt. Pepper…* deserves its special place in history as both The Beatles' masterpiece, and indeed the greatest *album* of all time, because it took the LP format to dazzling new heights – musically, sonically and conceptually.

Even in the CD era, no rock or electronic album managed to surpass its impact.

So, balls to the naysayers, I say. Picking holes in such an influential album for the annoying way it has become the Sacred Cow is like saying that football is a crap sport because the commentators on *Match Of The Day* are insufferable.

If anyone claims it's overrated, they should just put on *A Day In The Life* and let all their pettiness shrivel before the towering beauty of this extraordinary monument.



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THE SHARPER REVOLVER NEVER DISAPPOINTS EN ROUTE TO TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS

NO

CHRIS VINNICOMBE
Guitar & Bass editor

It's that question every fan loathes: what's your favourite Beatles album? It's impossible to choose just one, but for me there's barely a cigarette paper between *Help!*, *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* – a three-LP document of that remarkable period between February 1965 and June 1966 when the band stepped on the creative gas with unrivalled ferocity.

One thing I've *never* said in response to the aforementioned horror-question is *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Why not? It's clearly an artistic statement of indelible cultural significance that contains moments of staggering genius, but we're talking about The Beatles here; of course it is.

I'm not saying *Pepper…* is overrated, necessarily – if anything, I often find myself arguing that there's plenty about The Beatles that's underrated, not least Ringo's drumming. If you scoff at the man's importance, listen to Hal Blaine's spacious tom fills on Simon & Garfunkel's achingly beautiful *America*. Just a few months after *Pepper*'s release, Ringo's playing was already influencing the world's most in-demand sessioneers.

Yet for all its heady highs, when measured by the yardstick of The Beatles' own catalogue, *Sgt. Pepper…* falls short. Where *Revolver* crackles with the intensity of a band in which the competition between its main songwriters demands that everyone, from their bandmates to the Abbey Road teaboy, squeezes every drop of inspiration and ingenuity into the grooves, there's little doubt that the *Pepper…* sessions saw Lennon's caustic wit and sharp focus softened by acid, even if he claimed to have been under its blurry influence only once during a studio session, and even then only by accident.

FIXING A (TRACKLISTING) HOLE

With Lennon reduced both sonically and psychologically to a spectral presence in the looking glass, Paul took the wheel, and the raw soul of the band's former leader is barely noticeable amid the flourishes and the artifice. McCartney is undoubtedly a musical genius, but can anyone really cheerlead for *When I'm Sixty-Four* or *Fixing A Hole* and keep a straight face?

Most frustratingly, the *Pepper…* sessions yielded what is perhaps John Lennon's finest work, but it doesn't feature on the album. Pressure from EMI saw *Strawberry Fields Forever* released on a 7" alongside Paul's wonderful *Penny Lane* in February 1967. Though as a double A-side, it represents the high-water mark for the pop single, imagine for a moment if *Pepper…*'s tracklisting contained these masterpieces of introspection and nostalgia, instead of a couple of its sillier and more throwaway moments? We'd likely be having a very different conversation.

A Day In The Life is still an utterly astonishing finale, but at times when revisiting *Sgt. Pepper…*, it feels like a slog to get to the summit. Listening to 'the greatest pop LP of all time' shouldn't feel like hard work, it should be pure joy. The sharper and more economical *Revolver* never disappoints en route to *Tomorrow Never Knows* and yes, I do have a soft spot for *Yellow Submarine* and refuse to apologise for it.

Am I saying that the pollsters have got it wrong over the years? That popular opinion isn't to be trusted? I think I probably am. *Sgt. Pepper…* is not the greatest album of all time and Del Boy falling through the bar in *Only Fools And Horses* is not the funniest moment in the history of British television. *Pepper…* is a unique and towering work of art for certain, but in a straight fistfight, *Revolver* has the best tunes. And that's what really makes an album great. ●

The Trip

Orlando

Vinyl adventurer Mark Elliott boards a plane to Orlando and discovers a virtual theme park for record hunters, with nine – yes, nine – stores all ripe for a ransacking

It's a dilemma many of us share: the holiday we secretly want – a fortnight driving round the back streets of towns and cities, getting ensconced in dusty shops, crate digging – or the one we find ourselves on: a two-week package trip to Florida, spent (it seems to me, anyway) in endless queues for nausea-inducing rides at the Magic Kingdom with the extended family. And I'm not alone. Orlando is one of the most popular summer holiday destinations for Brits, with 1.7 million of us visiting the wider State of Florida in 2015.

I wonder how many of them experience a day as exciting as mine – a staggering nine record stores, all within a few miles of each other and, hands-down, better vinyl hunting than you'll find in seemingly more obvious US choices, such as Manhattan. Orlando is a record collector's dream and, although you'll need a car to get around and a generous baggage allowance for the flight home, this city turns up some elusive finds.

Orlando may be nicknamed 'The City Beautiful', but I'd soon tagged it 'The City Bountiful'. With 2.3 million-plus residents in the wider metropolitan area, it seems they'd all been buying an awful lot of records back in the day. The amount of second-hand vinyl here is stunning and, although the pound is lower than it used to be against the dollar, prices are still keen. On my trip, I find that LPs are about 10-15 per cent cheaper than back home, while 7" singles are $2 to $3 and 12"s around $5 to $7.

The traffic is heavy in the city, but parking is easy everywhere. In truth, it was a rush to cover all nine stores in a single day, but with discipline and a heavy heart for the stacks of stock I wasn't able to attack, I just about managed it!

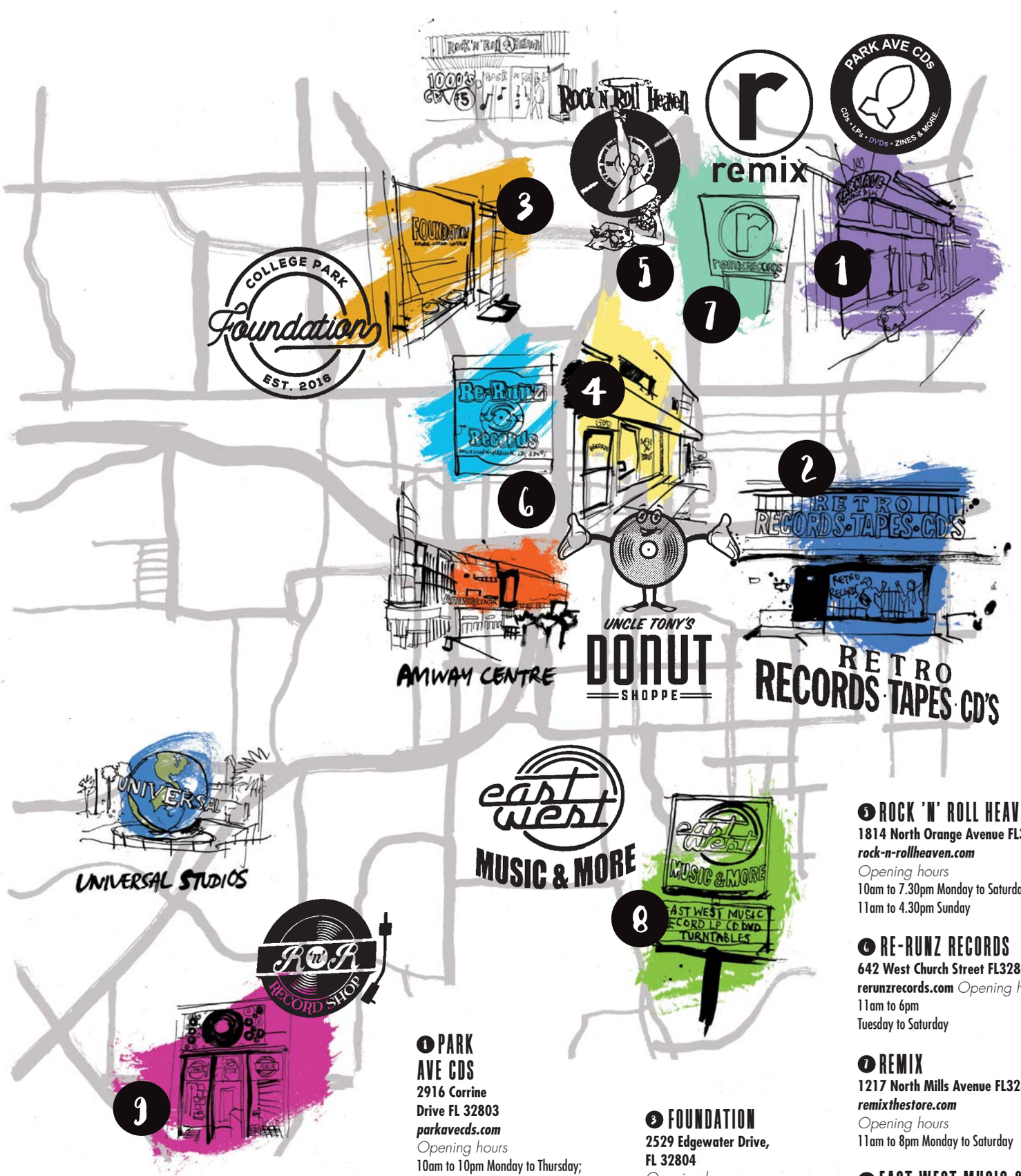
Orlando has a staggering nine record stores, all within a few miles of each other

A couple of stores would've taken me hours to investigate thoroughly, so pace yourself – there's a lot to get through.

The theme parks had kept me busy for a few days – there's even some Disney-related vinyl for sale at them (the widely available picture-disc soundtracks and some nice LP reissues of *The Lady And The Tramp* and *Alice In Wonderland* storybooks). I'd dived into a couple of Barnes & Nobles, too – there are a handful across the city – and found good vinyl sections in two of the three I visited, with a number of store exclusives.

So I'd had a bit of a fix already, but this was the blowout course! Mindful of the need to consider the weight on the plane and my customs declaration back at Gatwick, I'd planned to keep spending moderate;

Illustration Ben Talon



❶ PARK AVE CDS

2916 Corrine Drive FL 32803
parkavecds.com
Opening hours
10am to 10pm Monday to Thursday;
10am to 11pm Friday and Saturday;
11am to 8pm Sunday

❷ RETRO RECORDS

59 North Bumby Avenue FL 32803
retrorecords orlando.com
Opening hours
11am to 7pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 5pm Sunday

❸ FOUNDATION

2529 Edgewater Drive, FL 32804
Opening hours
11am to 9pm Tuesday to Thursday; noon to 10pm Friday and Saturday; noon to 6pm Sunday

❹ UNCLE TONY'S DONUT SHOPPE

703 North Orange Avenue FL32801
eldonutshoppe.com
Opening hours
Noon to 8pm Monday to Saturday; noon to 6pm Sunday

❺ ROCK 'N' ROLL HEAVEN

1814 North Orange Avenue FL32804
rock-n-rollheaven.com
Opening hours
10am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday;
11am to 4.30pm Sunday

❻ RE-RUNZ RECORDS

642 West Church Street FL32805
rerunzrecords.com *Opening hours*
11am to 6pm
Tuesday to Saturday

❼ REMIX

1217 North Mills Avenue FL32803
remixthestore.com
Opening hours
11am to 8pm Monday to Saturday

❽ EAST WEST MUSIC & MORE

4895 South Orange Avenue FL32806
facebook/eastwestmusic&more
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Saturday

❾ R 'N' R RECORD SHOP

5419 International Drive FL32819
facebook.com/RNRRecordShop
Opening hours
10am to 8pm Monday to Sunday

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST IN ORLANDO

Located to the south west of this map

1 PARK AVE CDS

Don't be put off by the name of this store: I find a better selection of new stock here than almost anywhere else I subsequently visit. Maroon 5's second and third albums find their way into my basket, along with Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream*, badged as part of Capitol Music's recent 75th birthday celebrations. There's a decent amount of used stock, too, and I pick up a good haul of Andy Gibb 7"s for a couple of dollars apiece – he was a much bigger star here than in the UK. That's one of the benefits of an overseas expedition: hoovering up back catalogues of acts that barely shifted a unit back home and thus rarely turn up at UK fairs or charity shops.

Music From The Edge Of Heaven is a US mini-album containing a mix of songs and issued in 1986 when Wham! split. It's not particularly rare, but I offer a retail-inspired tribute for $7. Alongside the vinyl, there's a very wide range of CDs here – including lots of hesitate-and-you'll-miss-them boxsets – plus books, magazines, neat stationery and gifts.

Michael Redig loved Park Ave so much, he ended up working there. It's been around in different locations for more than 30 years and at its current address for 10. As a visitor, Redig always used to call in, and jumped at the chance to join the staff when he moved nearby. His chatty interest in my mission and the pack of nifty store stickers he thrusts into my hand give me a feeling that today is going to end up being the highlight of my holiday.

2 RETRO RECORDS

The first thing that hits you is the memorabilia. There are walls of it – from rare 60s Beatles products to the classic Osmond dolls from a decade later. This store initially seems more 'museum' than record shop. Then your eyes focus on the racks of used vinyl and holiday panic sets in – how much can I carry home on the plane and, with seven stores still to visit, how much can I afford to spend here?

I decide to focus on singles exclusively and the vast 12" rack yields early dividends. A Motown promo of Lionel Richie's 1992 *Do It To Me* comeback is $6. An intriguing collective of rock acts such as Motörhead, Slade and Venom recorded a Belgium-issued charity track, *Sport Alive*, in 1985 and here it is, in mint condition. Either a collector shipped it over or a tourist dumped it on arrival, but who knows the personal journey of most second-hand records? Whatever its story, I decide it's coming back to Europe again, joined by the US issue of Alphaville's *Universal Daddy* and Sheena Easton's *Jimmy Mack*. A picture-sleeve 7" promo of Michael Jackson's *Twenty-Five Miles*, written by Johnny Bristol and paired with the festive *Up On The Housetop*, was plundered from the Motown vaults in 1987 and secured an issue in France, the USA and Italy.

The store has been here since 1980 and is obviously a draw for other tourists escaping the parks like me – a chap from Hungary is picking up a lot of Bryan Ferry and another from France is focused on the soundtracks. I join

3 FOUNDATION

Situated in College Park, slightly further out than many of the other stores, this neat vinyl and vintage clothing boutique has just celebrated its first anniversary. Founder Peter Cohen tells me that he tries to keep a good mix of collectibles and sources a lot of stock online. Like everywhere else I visit, the discs are in great condition. Nothing is too expensive – and collectibles are priced fairly – and I unearth a few great finds in his bargain racks. Lime were a Canadian electro-disco act and the Prism Records issue of their *Greatest Hits* in 1985 is something I'd never found in a decent state, but here, I pick up a mint copy for less than $10. Madonna had been part of Breakfast Club before her breakthrough and, in 1987, the slimmed-down four-piece made the US Top 10 with *Right On Track*. Their debut LP is mine for a few dollars, alongside a nice copy of the soundtrack of *Star Trek IV*. Peter's not surprised at my random selection. "The kids who buy a lot of vinyl now have such eclectic tastes," he tells me. "They come in, buy the vintage clothing and pick up some random stuff to play back home. It's really inspiring!" For a collector like me, who enjoys The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and their like, but sometimes tires of the endless attention they get, this gives me fresh hope that my interest in Flock Of Seagulls will one day generate equal excitement elsewhere... Plus Peter sort of implied I was a kid too. That hadn't happened in a while.

COLLEGE PARK
Foundation
EST. 2016
RECORDS
+
VINTAGE
CLOTHING

him and pick up the vinyl reissue of the Whitney Houston-led *Waiting To Exhale*.

Having broken my singles-only oath, I reason that my prized, still-boxed 1970s Cher doll truly needs a new outfit. For $20, I pick up a sealed 'Cleopatra' outfit set. The box recommends it's for children aged over three, so I guess they never reckoned on gay men like me still coveting this stuff, four decades on.

1 UNCLE TONY'S DONUT SHOPPE

About ready for a lunch break? Don't be fooled, as I was! The calorific temptations are long gone, but what's left is a fantastic store that's elegant and well stocked with a strong range that's particularly good for soul and R&B. John 'Brooklyn Dusty Fingers' Sarivola and Jonathan Santino tell me the store started as a vinyl and doughnut pop-up, but found its permanent home three years ago. "We found we kept eating the doughnuts in the downtime," they recall. "They were making us fat. We briefly considered replacing them with kale, but in the end, thought we'd stick to the records!" The project is clearly a labour of love and they spend a lot of time deciding on the shop-window selection for the front store, with the million-sellers relegated to the $5 room out back.

I head there first to find a copy of the 1980 soundtrack to *Loving Couples*, with tracks from The Temptations and Billy Preston. The guys don't charge me for this record when I later pick up a Canadian 12" copy of Trio's 1982 hit *Da Da Da* and the four-disc DJ promo boxset for the *Red Hot + Dance* release. The box hasn't yet been priced, but Brooklyn sets a fair one. Everything here is beautifully presented and there are decks to try out the discs.

5 ROCK 'N' ROLL HEAVEN

This vast store is certainly the emperor of music stores in Orlando, and literally takes my breath away (it has the widest range of collectibles I come across on my trip). I find myself drawn to the enormous and fantastically well-organised 7" racks. Artist by artist, section by section, it reminds me of Beanos, the legendary Croydon store once billed as the largest in Britain. Freddy Ehmen took over this 1977-launched store in May 1987 and now runs it with his brother. Boasting one of the largest ranges in the USA, you could easily spend a day here. Garage, psychedelic and soul are especially well served, but I come across every vinyl genre imaginable, plus cassettes, 8-track cartridges and LaserDiscs. "This place is the soul of Orlando," former musician Freddy tells me. "I can guarantee you'll find stock you can't easily source elsewhere." His customers include many of

6 RE-RUNZ RECORDS

With my wallet still gently smoking, this smaller but well-stocked soul-oriented specialist provides gentler respite in the shadow of the Orlando City Stadium. Like everywhere on this trip, I find the stock well-graded and the service beyond friendly. Owner Ed Smith spends time trying to source me a still-sealed copy of the 1986 Diana Ross And The Supremes *25th Anniversary* three-disc set, but I settle for his excellent-to-mint copy instead. A stack of sealed *Sesame Street 7"* singles also catches my eye and the puppets' take on the *Saturday Night Fever* disco sensation leads to a final purchase. How this pile of 1978 records ended up here unopened is another of the day's mysteries, as Ed just shruggs his shoulders, also none the wiser.

Florida's most famous musicians and other acts that passed through the State over the years. He credits Michael Jackson with the massive range of music memorabilia he carries – the late King Of Pop would spend a lot every time he stopped by. The walls are covered with sleeves signed by artists who have been in – and the toilet walls are an autograph hunter's dream. I don't have Michael's spending power, but do pick up a really nice US Wham! *Make It Big* picture disc and a PRT-issued Graduate album featuring a pre-Tears For Fears Curt and Roland doing their best Secret Affair impression. The best buy of the day is a 1983 West German,

This vast store is certainly the emperor of music stores in Orlando, and literally takes my breath away

RSO-issued box of all the Bee Gees albums up to *Living Eyes*, plus rarities. The set busts my holiday allowance, but I reason it's an efficient way of collecting one of my favourite bands' back catalogues in a unique package that'll hold its value.

Freddy tells me the vinyl boom is serving the city well and says the internet is helping everyone understand what records are worth. He tells me that 20 years ago, dealers would swoop in, pick up boxes of stock such as Northern Soul and sell it on at inflated prices. Freddy's prices are fair, but he knows what to charge. Still, it would have been a tragedy to leave that Bee Gees set behind…

Top five

1 THE CAR IS KING
You'll need a car; rentals are super-easy. All of the stores have parking outside or, in a couple of downtown locations, very close by.

2 GET IT ON CREDIT
Unlike many UK stores, the record stores all accept credit cards. Be careful of currency charges, though, which you'll be hit with each time you flash the plastic.

3 THE FAR SIDE
Florida is blessed with a scattering of record stores in the metropolitan hubs of Miami and St Petersburg.

4 PARK LIFE
If you're on holiday, the theme parks are likely what you'll also be here for – there are a lot of them and you'll need at least a full day for each one. Get to them early and be prepared to queue, although expensive Fast Pass access will help (a bit).

5 SHOP IT LIKE IT'S HOT
There's plenty of other shopping here, but avoid the tourist-trap flea markets south of the city. It's almost all tacky souvenir stuff with a few CD and DVD stalls of discs you can source easily elsewhere.

The Trip

Getting there

Plot your course on a map. We didn't – and although most of the stores are clustered downtown and in the northern suburbs of the city, you can spend a lot of time going round in circles if you don't plot out your route. The traffic in Orlando is heavy, so head out after the morning rush hour and get home before 5pm. If you're staying near the parks, it will take you just under an hour to reach the furthest store. If you follow the GPS – and you'd be a fool not to – it will likely take you on a few toll roads, so have some coins and low-denomination notes to hand.

8 EAST WEST MUSIC & MORE

This is the city's oldest operating record retailer, with an impressive 46 years on the clock, and was established when the area was populated predominantly with orange groves. There were once four stores, but now just this one soldiers on.

It's another real treat, with some impressive stock, including some great finds from recent Record Store Days and 2016's Black Friday. The second-hand stock secures me an interesting 1979 Casablanca TV-advertised double-disc compilation *A Night At Studio 54*. My clubbing days may be largely behind me, but this is the sort of collection that still gets my toes tapping, featuring cuts from Dan Hartman, Chic and Cheryl Lynn. From the

7 REMIX

Billed as something of a New Wave specialist, this is always going to float my boat – and doesn't disappoint. It actually carries a good range of wider pop/dance, too, and I'm happy to buy some mid-90s tracks on 12" DJ promos, including *As Long As You Love Me* from Florida's finest, Backstreet Boys. On a similar theme, my 12" of Ace Of Base's *Whenever You're Near Me* (label boss Clive Davis refused to release the original *Life Is A Flower* Stateside without a rewrite) surprisingly doesn't raise an eyebrow – I'm told this 18-month-old store sells a lot of this material, especially to European tourists. The New Wave and 80s stock is impressive, and I pine after some Japanese picture discs of early Madonna albums but manage to restrain myself. Instead, I pick up a Madonna wannabe's 12". Tia's incredibly derivative *Boy Toy* never got a UK release, but it's mine for $3. Billy Idol's debut US LP in mint condition cost a bit more – another crossed off my wants list.

Billed as something of a New Wave specialist, Remix is always going to float my boat

new racks, I pick up the fine Monkees 10" Record Store Day exclusive of B-sides from *Good Times* along with the red-vinyl 7" reissue of Falco's *Rock Me Amadeus/Vienna Calling* and the 10" picture disc of *Mickey Mouse March* from The Mouseketeers. I am, after all, in Florida.

1 R 'N' R RECORD SHOP

Situated in the heart of the tourist district, near to the outlet malls and the airport, we find R 'N' R tucked away in a small mall. It's worth a look – the amount of stock is more modest than some, but prices are keen and I like owner Anthony Venturini's trick of packaging the LPs and 12"s with a free 45. It persuades me to pick up a Barry Manilow US-only 12" EP of his Shakin' Stevens cover *Oh, Julie!*, which he'd paired with the 1975 MOR classic *I Write The Songs*. The latter topped the Billboard charts early the following year, and was also on my wants list.

I leave the store content, but something's nagging at me. I'd spied a copy of the 1985 Italian bootleg 12" of *The Wild Mix* by Duran Duran – a disc I'd read about but never actually seen before. Another welcome promotion here is that every purchase entitles you to a discount on the next. Not much use to visitors on a tight timetable, but… after a few minutes, I go back and seal the deal. With the discount, I secure a bargain and a copy of the John Taylor solo single *I Do What I Do* to boot. Now I just have to get all this bounty back home… ●

THE ESSENTIAL

Jazz

With a century of output, collecting jazz records can be a daunting prospect. **Martin Kelly** brings you the definitive guide to some of the best records by the most creative artists from the genre's most collectable and productive period on vinyl…

This year is the centenary of the first jazz recording. It was not an auspicious start when the Original Dixieland Jass Band entered the Victor Talking Machine Company's studio on the 12th floor of its New York offices to record a novelty million-seller hit, *Livery Stable Blues*, only to see it become the subject of a lawsuit. Yet the events of 26 February 1917 gave birth to a rich new artform.

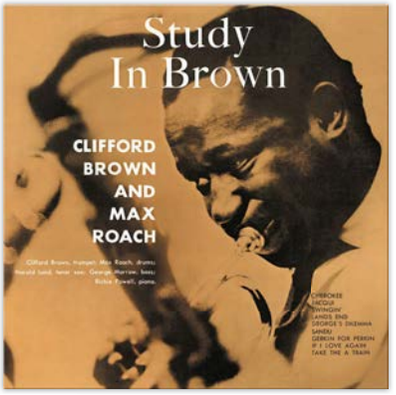
The sheer size of jazz's recorded history makes selecting just 40 essential records an almost impossible task. For every record included here, just as strong a case could be made for five, or even 10 others to take its place. The only way to reduce the size of the challenge is to apply some constraints.

So we've limited the timeframe covered to what many people consider to be the Golden Age of jazz records: 1955 to 1970. It may seem controversial to go for such a short period, but it's logical in the context of jazz record collecting. 1955 was a pivotal year for recorded jazz, because it was the point when the 12-inch LP format usurped the 10-inch LP. This change affected all forms of recorded music but, for jazz, it was a unique artistic liberation that gave the musicians extra time to stretch out and improvise in the way they already did on live dates. The end-point of our chosen era was just as significant to jazz, but for a different reason: the 1970 release of one LP, Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*, changed everything. Jazz was in commercial decline and Davis' move to a band playing electric instruments that fused jazz with rock and funk set the direction for the next decade.

The second rule we've applied is to limit each artist to one selection (and to exclude compilations). That necessarily means that some fantastic records have been edged out: John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* lost out to *A Love Supreme*; Sonny Rollins' *A Night At The Village Vanguard* missed out to *Saxophone Colossus*; Hank Mobley's *Workout* made way for *Soul Station* – and that's just among the tenor saxophonists! At least half a dozen of trumpeter Miles Davis' seminal LPs were excluded in favour of *Kind Of Blue*.

KIND OF NEW

Our final decision was to keep things accessible. Before 1955, jazz had already evolved many sub-genres, and the period from then until 1970 only served to accelerate the variety, as the artists became ever-more adventurous. Some forms are easier for the newcomer to appreciate, while others can sound to the uninitiated like a chaotic cacophony. While experienced jazz devotees may mourn the exclusion of important recordings from the likes of Peter Brötzmann or Cecil Taylor, we've aimed to offer starting points for the exploration of more challenging material.



STUDY IN BROWN

CLIFFORD BROWN AND MAX ROACH (1955)

The quintet co-led by trumpeter Clifford Brown and drummer Max Roach recorded five LPs (plus a sixth under tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins) in a brief but blistering two years before Brown's tragic death in a car accident aged 26, which also claimed pianist Richie Powell. This is a prime example of his brilliant ringing tone, bravura solo style and compositional skill.

Rarest 1955 EmArcy MG 36037 **£7-£70** (median **£21**) *Latest* EmArcy/Jazz At 33⅓ rpm Series MG 36037 **£N/A**

AFRO-CUBAN

KENNY DORHAM (1955)

This shows jazz on the cusp of the 12-inch LP era. It debuted as a four-track 10-inch, featuring fellow members of the original Jazz Messengers Art Blakey and Horace Silver; two years later, it re-appeared as a 12-inch LP supplemented with three extra tunes. Dorham's percussion-enhanced Latin influences made him perhaps the nearest trumpeter in spirit to the legendary Dizzy Gillespie.

Rarest 1955 Blue Note BLP 5065 **£195** *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BLP 1535 **£12**

CONCORDE

THE MODERN JAZZ QUARTET (1955)

Here's another example of jazz coming to terms with the possibilities of the then-new 12-inch LP. This session finds the Modern Jazz Quartet recorded with the longer playing time of the new format in mind for the first time, and with their new drummer, Connie Kay, making a subtle but distinctive contribution. Their music is sometimes unfairly derided as "chamber jazz", but despite the influence of European classical music, the blues was never far from the heart of their recordings.

Rarest Prestige PRLP 7005 (photographic cover) £3-100 (median £20)
Latest 2014 Back to Black/Prestige 7005 £17

SAXOPHONE COLOSSUS

SONNY ROLLINS (1956)

This record lives up to its name, as tenor saxophonist Rollins makes one of jazz's definitive statements on the instrument. This recording cemented Rollins' reputation as the foremost exponent of his instrument of the 1950s and made him the strongest influence on other tenor players until the ascendency of John Coltrane. The music ranges from balladry through a Brecht/Weill show tune from *The Threepenny Opera* and hard-bop to the calypso *St. Thomas*, reflecting his Caribbean family roots.

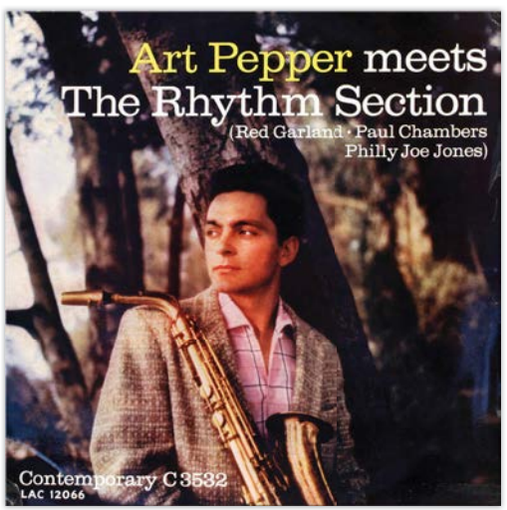
Rarest 1956 Prestige PRLP 7079 Discogs: £117-£547 (median £213)
Latest 2016 Jazz Images 37019

BRILLIANT CORNERS

THELONIOUS MONK (1957)

At points in his career, several record companies considered idiosyncratic pianist Monk commercially unviable. It took the perseverance of Riverside's producer Orrin Keepnews to revitalise his career. Monk repaid this faith, including the three studio sessions needed to record *Brilliant Corners*. The fruits of these labours were hard earned, with it famously taking over 25 takes and some clever tape splicing to deliver the title track.

Rarest 1957 Riverside RLP 12-226 (mono, white label with sky blue 'reels and microphone' logo). Discogs £8-£234 (median £95)
Latest 2017 Jazz Images 37049



MEETS THE RHYTHM SECTION

ART PEPPER (1957)

Alto saxophonist Pepper is mostly associated with the Californian 'cool' jazz style, but such classifications often prove simplistic. For this, he was teamed up with Miles Davis' rhythm section to produce an East-meets-West Coast classic. All kinds of myths have grown up around the short notice and lack of preparation for the recording session, but one thing is certain: all four musicians inspire each other to new heights throughout.

Rarest 1957 Contemporary Records C3532 (mono) Discogs £4-£461 (median £80) *Latest* 2015 DOL DOL873H £10

IN NEW YORK

CHET BAKER (1958)

Baker had it all: film-star good looks, trumpet mastery and even a distinctive singing voice. But drug problems forced him to leave behind his early West Coast successes and record for New York's Riverside. This is another fine example of East-meets-West done right; Baker keeps pace with a high-calibre band, while tugging heart strings with his melodic lyricism.

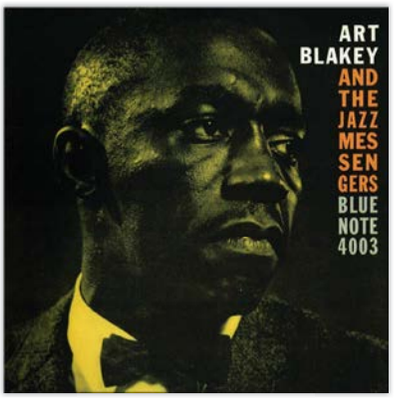
Rarest 1958 Riverside RLP 12-281 (mono, 'small' blue label with silver 'reels and microphone' logo) Discogs £8-£209 (median £108) *Latest* 2015 Original Jazz Classics OJC-207

IN SAN FRANCISCO

THE CANNONBALL ADDERLEY QUINTET (1959)

Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley and his brother Nat were perhaps jazz's greatest popularisers. This landmark record captures them at their best, at the very moment they gave birth to the soul-jazz style in a packed, tiny, sweaty club. It reinvigorated live jazz recordings; it also included Adderley's lengthy spoken introductions.

Rarest 1959 Riverside RLP 12-311 (mono, 'small' blue label with silver 'reels and microphone' logo) Discogs £2-£27 (median £5) *Latest* 2014 Original Jazz Classics OJC-035

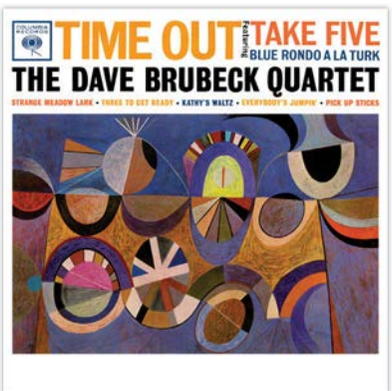


ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS (1959)

Widely referred to as *Moanin'* after its most celebrated track, this marks drummer Blakey's return to Blue Note for a run of relentless hard-bop LPs. There's talent to burn: notably firebrand trumpeter Lee Morgan and that most soulful of pianists, Bobby Timmons.

Rarest 1959 Blue Note BLP 4003 (mono with '47 West 63rd NYC' address on blue/white labels) Discogs £4-£156 (median £54) *Latest* 2016 Blue Note/Jazz At 33⅓ rpm Series BST 84003 £15

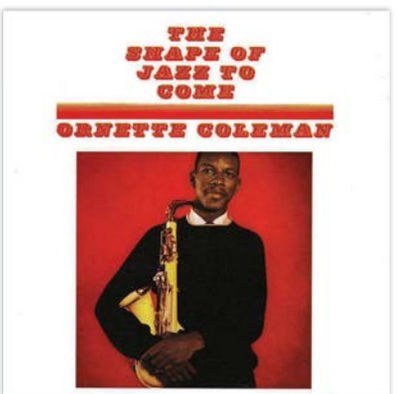


TIME OUT

THE DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET (1959)

If you know only one jazz tune, the odds are that it's this record's hit – *Take Five*, so named for its 5/4 time signature. The album's concept was the use of unusual time signatures and, when first released, this intellectual approach was reviewed harshly in the jazz press, but became one of only a handful of jazz LPs to be million-sellers.

Rarest 1959 Columbia CL 1397 (mono promo copy with white 'six eye' labels) Discogs £3-67 (median £16) *Latest* 2017 DOL DOL705HP (picture disc) £12

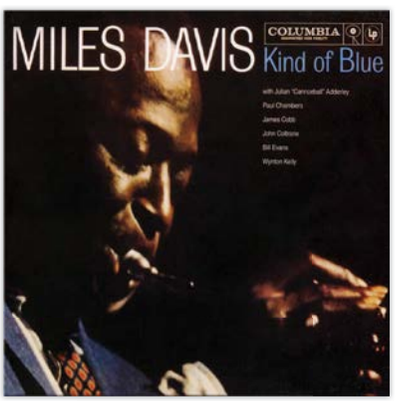


THE SHAPE OF JAZZ TO COME

ORNETTE COLEMAN (1959)

This album documents the first time that Coleman took his working band into the studio. It was released just a month before the group's infamous residency at New York's Five Spot Cafe – and the combined effect sent shock waves through the jazz establishment. Critics and musicians alike were split; some praised the music's inventiveness, but others branded Coleman a charlatan.

Rarest 2016 DOM-Ermitage VNL 12232 LP £13 *Latest* 1959 Atlantic 1317 (mono with orange/plum 'bullseye' labels)



KIND OF BLUE

MILES DAVIS (1959)

It would have been impossible to exclude the biggest-selling jazz LP in history, especially when it features an all-star band including greats like John Coltrane and Bill Evans. *Kind Of Blue* embodied perfectly the ideas Davis (and others) had been gestating about modal jazz in the preceding couple of years. Its influence on other musicians was immediate and everlasting.

Rarest 1959 Columbia CL 1355 (mono promo copy with white 'six eye' labels) Popsike £170-£367 (median £158) *Latest* 2017 DOL DOL725HP (picture disc) £12

MINGUS AH UM
CHARLES MINGUS (1959)

Bass player and bandleader Charles Mingus had a fearsome reputation and his commitment led to many disputes; yet he had a terrific talent for composition. Mingus focuses regular collaborators Booker Ervin, Horace Parlan and Dannie Richmond among others to pay tribute to his heroes, and still finds time for a potent Civil Rights statement with *Fables Of Faubus*.

£ *Rarest* 1959 Columbia CL 1370 (mono promo copy with white 'six eye' labels) Popsike **£25-£119** (median **£58**)
Latest 2017 DOL DOL717HP (picture disc) **£12**

TRUE BLUE
TINA BROOKS (1960)

Harold Floyd 'Tina' Brooks was one of those tragic figures that seem unusually common in jazz. Though he led four recording sessions, *True Blue* was the only one released during his lifetime. The last time he was recorded was in 1961 and he died 13 years later. If nothing else, this sad biography has added lustre to a record already held in the most revered status by collectors.

£ *Rarest* 1959 Blue Note BLP 4041 (mono with '47 West 63rd NYC' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£390** *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84041 **£12**

SOUL STATION
HANK MOBLEY (1960)

Jazz critic Leonard Feather described Mobley as "middleweight champion of the tenor saxophone" on his 1961 LP *Workout*'s liner notes: it was meant as a compliment, but stuck as a slight. Mobley's smooth tone was a contrast to Coltrane and Rollins, reflecting his more introverted character. Among his 20-plus Blue Note LPs, this stands out.

£ *Rarest* 1960 Blue Note BLP 4031 (mono with '47 West 63rd NYC' address on blue/white labels) *Latest* 2016 Blue Note/Jazz At 33⅓ rpm Series BST 84031 Discogs **£39-£1,016** (median **£176**)

Jazz Boxsets

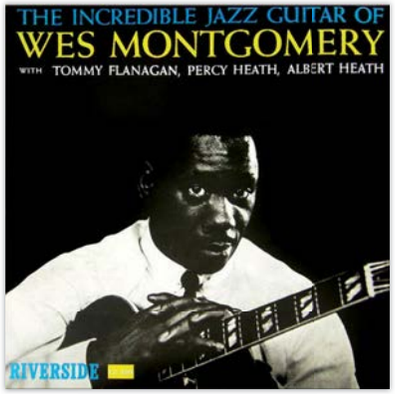
Boxsets have a lot to offer the jazz collector: they're often packaged beautifully, frequently include previously unreleased music and typically come with informative booklets. Although out-of-print sets can be hard to track down, the flipside is that owners of originals typically preserve them in excellent condition.

Large record companies tend only to release sets of material from the most popular artists. For example, Legacy has a programme of Miles Davis material under the banner of *The Bootleg Series*. The first four volumes are out of print, but not too hard to find, whereas 2017's *Vol. 5* is widely available and comprises intriguing studio recordings and outtakes. Another recommended set is John Coltrane's *The Atlantic Years In Mono*, released by Rhino Records in 2016, which went back to the hardly touched mono master tapes and greatly improves upon the company's previous stereo boxset, *The Heavyweight Champion: The Complete Atlantic Recordings*, which covered the same ground.

Concord Music Group's *The Complete Village Vanguard Recordings*, 1961 is a must for devotees of Bill Evans. It includes the two vaunted Riverside LPs from 1961 and adds two further records of other takes from the same day. The only quibble with this exquisite set is that it used the same digital transfers as the earlier CD version, rather than taking the opportunity to revisit the analogue master tapes.

Finally, any discussion of jazz boxsets is incomplete without mentioning Mosaic Records. The brainchild of celebrated producer and archivist Michael Cuscuna, Mosaic set the standard and has licensed and released more than 150 limited-edition vinyl sets since 1982.

Mosaic often covered less well-known, and therefore highly collectible, material and included fantastic booklets written by acknowledged experts in the field. Many Mosaic sets are out of print, but there's a healthy second-hand market and most of them have increased in value.



THE INCREDIBLE JAZZ GUITAR OF
WES MONTGOMERY (1960)

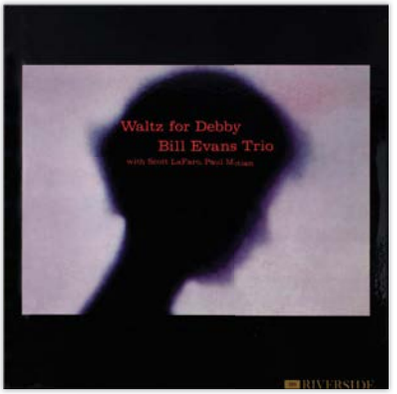
When Montgomery burst onto the scene in the late 1950s, he was a guitar sensation: able to encompass every known approach to jazz guitar while adding his own distinctive 'double octave' technique. There are at least two great live LPs (*Full House* and *Smokin' At The Half Note*), but this studio set shows him at his best.

Rarest 1960 Riverside RLP 12-320 (mono, 'small' blue label with silver 'reels and microphone' logo) Discogs **£4-£105** (median **£51**) *Latest* 2016 Vinyl Lovers Eu 6785430 **£13**

THE BLUES AND THE ABSTRACT TRUTH
OLIVER NELSON (1961)

Producer Creed Taylor took a gamble when he signed Nelson for a one-record deal for the Impulse! label. Nelson wasn't a star soloist, but had a great arranger's ear and, together, they enticed a who's who of talent into the studio. Nelson went on to enjoy a successful career as a TV and film-music composer in the late 60s.

Rarest 1961 Impulse! A-5 (mono promo copy with white labels and single sleeve cover) *Latest* 2016 Impulse!/Jazz At 33⅓ rpm Series AS-5 Popsike **£62-£158** (median **£70**)



WALTZ FOR DEBBY
BILL EVANS TRIO (1962)

On 25 June 1961, the Bill Evans Trio performed at the Village Vanguard in New York and diners chatted and rattled cutlery throughout. Yet both records derived from this day (the other being *Sunday At The Village Vanguard*) are seen as the greatest-ever live jazz piano-trio records: sadly, bass player Scott LaFaro died in a car accident 10 days after its recording.

Rarest 1962 Riverside RLP-399 (mono promo copy with white labels) Popsike **£28-£2,416** (median **£242**) *Latest* 2016 Jazz Images 37021 (gatefold sleeve)

Reissues

If you're interested primarily in the music rather than historical artefacts, then reissues offer a way to reduce the cost and hassle. However, it's not always simple, because there are often multiple reissues of the same record. So how do you know which one to choose?

The old adage that you get what you pay for applies: inexpensive reissues seem attractive, but the low price is often achieved as a result of cost-cutting measures. Some skimp on raw materials, some reduce mastering and audio production costs, and a few are illegal, unofficial bootlegs that dodge licensing fees. The 'parent' record companies that own the rights and the master tapes aim to hit the sweet spot between quality and affordability, which often leads to a focus on low-risk reissues to guarantee a profit. The owners of vintage jazz labels, such as Blue Note, Impulse, Prestige, Riverside and Verve, have conservative reissue programmes, which ensure that famous records are always available.

The market for the highest-quality reissues of less well known artists' records is left to a few specialist companies. Rights owners are prepared to do licensing deals with these small companies to make the music available without bearing the commercial risk. The licenses are usually restrictive, so the small licensees do everything they can to offer distinctive reissues, such as remastering from the original analogue master tapes, using high-quality so-called virgin vinyl, including alternate takes or previously unreleased material and offering sumptuous packaging.

Prime examples include the long-established Analogue Productions; Blue Note specialists par excellence Music Matters Jazz (who announced their final 13 releases this year); Impex Records, with their small but choice selection of Columbia re-issues; and new entries to the jazz market, Electronic Recording Co., who are targetting the ultra-high end with luxury reissues of a selection of 1950s Prestige rarities.

OUR MAN IN PARIS
DEXTER GORDON (1963)

Gordon set the template for bebop on the tenor saxophone and had several comebacks. One was Gordon's run of LPs for Blue Note, which overlapped with his 14-year European sojourn. Here, Gordon was joined by Bud Powell and Kenny Clark. Powell's health problems meant the band had to rely on standards, but this only served to intensify the performances.

£ *Rarest* 1963 Blue Note BLP 4146 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£36-£209** (median **£109**) *Latest* 2016 Doxy ACV 2070 **£13**

CRACKLIN'
ROY HAYNES (1963)

Now in his 90s, Roy 'Snap Crackle' Haynes is still going strong. He earned his nickname for his sharp, precise drumming style and played with Parker, Coltrane and Vaughan among others. *Cracklin'* boasts Booker Ervin's distinctive tenor sax sound and underrated pianist Ronnie Mathews. The LP deserves essential status for the modal masterpiece *Dorian* alone.

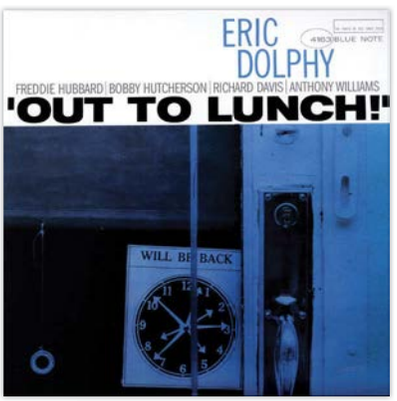
£ *Rarest* 1963 New Jazz NJLP 8286 (mono with purple labels) Discogs **£12-£168** (median **£87**) *Latest* 2000 New Jazz NJLP 8286 **£12**

BACK AT THE CHICKEN SHACK
JIMMY SMITH (1963)

Smith put the organ on the map as a legitimate jazz instrument. Blue Note recorded him extensively, stockpiling material for later releases. This and *Midnight Special* were recorded together in a day; Smith was joined by soulful teammates Stanley Turrentine on tenor sax and Kenny Burrell on guitar – they reunited in the 1980s.

£ *Rarest* 1963 Blue Note BLP 4117 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£2-38** (median **£14**) *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84117 **£14**

PRESTIGE



OUT TO LUNCH!
ERIC DOLPHY (1964)

Jazz's avant garde has rarely reached such a pinnacle. Multi-instrumentalist Dolphy deploys his full arsenal of technique with a talented band. The absence of a piano opens up space; Bobby Hutcherson's atmospheric vibes oscillate between ethereal shimmer and sharp dissonance. Dolphy died suddenly, in June of the same year.

£ *Rarest* 1964 Blue Note BLP 4163 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£8-£334** (median **£194**) *Latest* 2016 Blue Note/Jazz At 33⅓ rpm Series BLP 4163 **£13**

THE FREEDOM BOOK
BOOKER ERVIN (1964)

Ervin graduated from Charles Mingus' band and embarked on the celebrated *Book* series of LPs. He worked with a nucleus of highly talented individuals: polymath pianist Jaki Byard; bassist Richard Davis who later appeared on *Astral Weeks*; and Alan Dawson, who was tutor to the legendary drummer Tony Williams.

£ *Rarest* 1964 Prestige PRLP 7295 (mono with '203 South Washington Ave., Bergenfield, NJ' address on black/yellow fireworks labels) Discogs **£9-129** (median **£39**) *Latest* 2016 Analogue Productions APRJ 7295 **£36**

GETZ/GILBERTO

STAN GETZ AND JOÃO GILBERTO (1964)

This wasn't tenor saxophonist Stan Getz's first LP of bossa-nova tunes (that was *Jazz Samba*), but it established the craze with *The Girl From Ipanema* and was the first jazz LP to win the Album Of The Year Grammy. Backed by a South American band, it captured bossa-nova's spirit and inspired many copycat recordings.

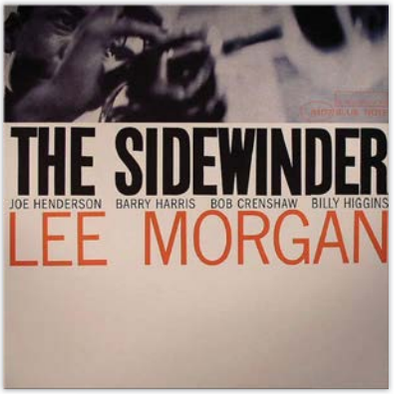
Rarest 1964 Verve V-8545 (mono with black/silver labels and gatefold) Discogs **£5-31** (median **£16**) *Latest* 2016 Verve 60 Series 0600753551561 **£19**

EMPYREAN ISLES

HERBIE HANCOCK (1964)

Hancock recorded this just over a year after being sought out by Miles Davis to join his new quintet. Brass-featured quartet recordings are rarer than those with saxophonists; successful ones all the more so. Here, Hancock constructs four adventurous compositions, including the repetitious piano vamp of *Cantaloupe Island*, which has often been revisited and sampled.

Rarest 1964 Blue Note BLP 4175 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£31-£147** (median **£110**) *Latest* 2015 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84175 **£15**

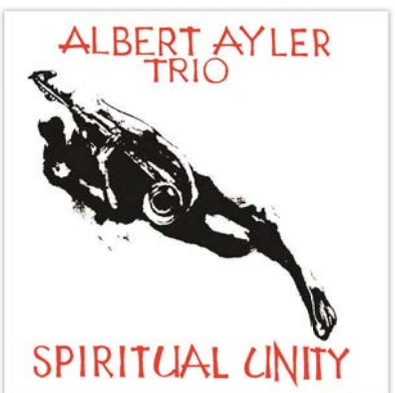


THE SIDEWINDER

LEE MORGAN (1964)

Serendipity struck when Morgan needed one more tune to fill out the 1963 recording session marking his return after a period of recovery from drug problems. *The Sidewinder* is so infectious, even the suits at Chrysler picked it up as the soundtrack for a TV ad. But this record isn't a one-trick pony and Morgan is matched note-for-note by Joe Henderson on tenor sax.

Rarest 1964 Blue Note BLP 4157 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£7-£226** (median **£39**) *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84157 **£13**



SPIRITUAL UNITY

ALBERT AYLER (1965)

No free-jazz collection is complete without this vital touchstone of the form. Ayler's first appearance on the cult ESP Disk label is surprisingly restrained for a concept that abandons most conventional structures. As Ayler himself said: "We weren't playing, we were listening to each other."

Rarest 1965 ESP Disk 1002 (mono individually numbered pre-release edition of 200 copies with booklet) Popsike **£506-£1,621** (median **£1,020**) *Latest* 2015 ESP Disk ESP1002LP **£14**

A LOVE SUPREME

JOHN COLTRANE (1965)

Widely considered the most influential jazz LP ever recorded, *A Love Supreme* was the zenith of Coltrane's 'classic quartet' work and marked the jumping-off point into the final two years of his career as he devoted himself to ever more spiritual and free-jazz work. It can be seen almost as a classical work, in four movements.

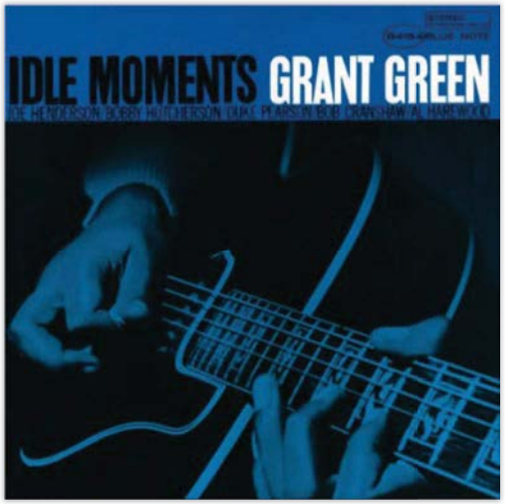
Rarest 1965 Impulse! A-77 (mono promo copy with white labels, gatefold) Discogs **£59-234** (median **£146**) *Latest* 2016 Impulse! 4753604 ('The Complete Masters' edition) **£30**

First Pressing Detective Work

First pressings are prized highly by jazz record collectors, but acquiring 50-plus-year-old records brings challenges. Careful research is essential to ensure you know how to identify genuine first pressings, if you're to avoid paying over the odds for a later version.

Consider this case study: *Miles: The New Miles Davis Quintet*, first released as Prestige Records PRLP 7014 in America in 1956. There were (at least) three variants of this record issued in just two years – all often described as "original" pressings. The first one commands prices over 10 per cent higher than the second and almost 30 per cent higher than the third. So it's worth knowing how to tell them apart.

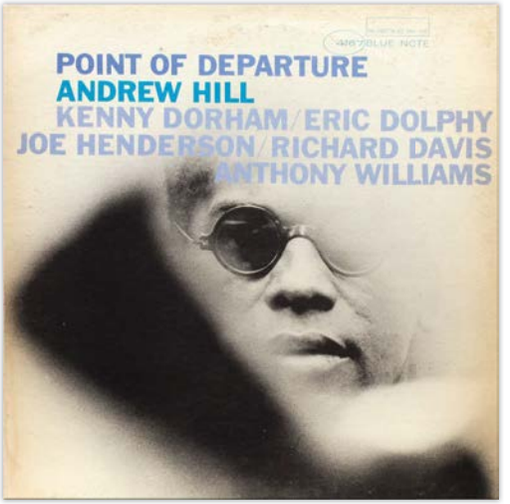
In this case, the first identifying feature is the cover: the third is blue, while the first two are green. The way to distinguish between the two green covers is that the first pressing cover carries the wording 'prestige lp 7014' in a script font while the second pressing cover has the wording 'PRESTIGE HI FI LP 7014' in a different font. Later reissues used the first pressing



IDLE MOMENTS
GRANT GREEN (1965)

Guitarist Green first attracted attention in Blue Note's house electric-rhythm section alongside organist John Patton. He was renowned for his blues-drenched ringing tone and fleet-fingered single-note solo lines. He was no slouch in the company of more intellectual material and musicians, never more so than on this – considered Green's jazz masterpiece, before he went in search of commercial recognition with a series of funkier recordings.

Rarest 1965 Blue Note BLP 4154 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£10-£414** (median **£93**)
Latest 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84154 **£18**



POINT OF DEPARTURE
ANDREW HILL (1964)

By the mid 1960s, a new generation of young, adventurous players was appearing and the jazz press christened their post-bop music as the 'New Thing'. Pianist Hill was a key member of this approach and the aptly titled *Point Of Departure* found him surrounded by like-minded performers, drawing inspiration from the previous generation (the tune *New Monastery* is a nod to Thelonious Monk) to chart a way forward for the next.

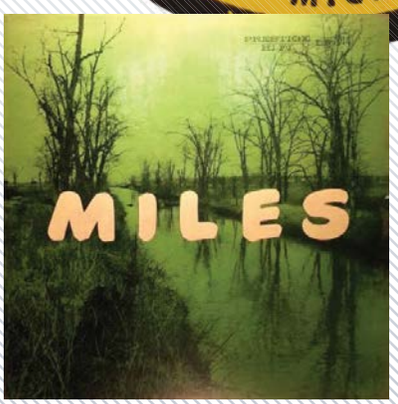
Rarest 1965 Blue Note BLP 4167 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£20-£200** (median **£75**)
Latest 2015 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84154 **£14**

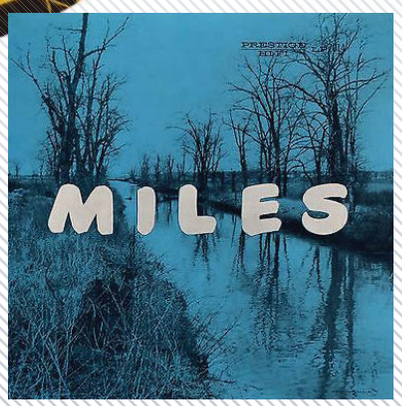
cover design, so identification must include an examination of the record's labels.

All of the original three variants have Prestige yellow and black so-called 'fireworks' labels, with a characteristic 'deep groove' indented ring. The key difference is the address printed on the labels: the first pressing will always have the 446 W. 50th ST., N. Y. C. address while most second pressings and third pressings will have the 203 South Washington Ave., N.J. address.

Lastly, it's wise to make a final check of the deadwax etchings. All three original variants will have the letters 'RVG' (for the recording engineer Rudy Van Gelder) hand-etched on both sides with the matrix numbers PRLP 7014 A2 and PRLP 7014 B hand-etched on the relevant sides.

Note that there are other subtle identification details that we don't have space to cover here.





RARITIES

DIALOGUE
BOBBY HUTCHERSON (1965)

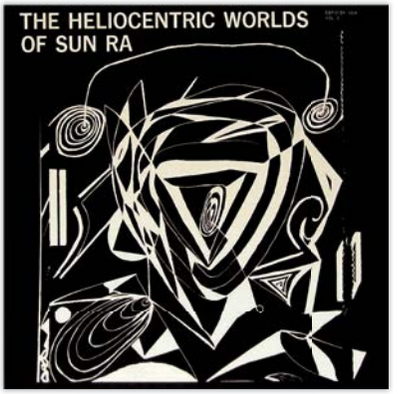
Having graced a string of records by fellow 'New Thing' exponents, vibraphone player Hutcherson's first release called in the favours. A comparison between Milt Jackson's style on the Modern Jazz Quartet's *Concorde* and Hutcherson's hanging, mysterious, shimmering notes shows how far the cutting edge of the vibraphone had moved in a decade.

Rarest 1965 Blue Note BLP 4198 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£59-230** (median **£126**)
Latest 2013 Elemental Music ERLP 1003 **£12**

SONG FOR MY FATHER
THE HORACE SILVER QUINTET (1965)

This LP has two tunes from the last session with hard-bop pianist Silver's famous quintet, featuring Junior Cook and Blue Mitchell; the remaining four tracks introduce his new band, highlighting Joe Henderson's incendiary tenor sax performances. Henderson's title-track solo launches the composition into the stratosphere.

Rarest 1965 Blue Note BLP 4185 Discogs: **£7-£140** (median **£23**) *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84185 **£15**



THE HELIOCENTRIC WORLDS OF SUN RA, VOL. 1
SUN RA (1965)

Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount) claimed to have came from the planet Saturn to preach peace. Ra led The Arkestra musical collective,which included saxophonist John Gilmore and bassist Ronnie Boykins. They morphed NY's free-jazz scene into their own unique cosmic concept.

Rarest 1965 ESP Disk 1014 Discogs **£29-£94** (median **£53**)
Latest 2015 ESP Disk 1014 1000 50th Anniversary limited-edition green vinyl **£19**

JAZZ SUITE INSPIRED BY DYLAN THOMAS'S UNDER MILK WOOD
THE STAN TRACEY QUARTET (1965)

Bobby Wellins' breathy saxophone on the haunting *Starless And Bible Black* is a thing of true beauty. Yet it's a damning indictment of home support for British jazz that within five years of this landmark recording, pianist Tracey was about to give up his music career.

Rarest 1965 Columbia UK Lansdowne Series 33SX 1774 (mono) Discogs **£35-£120** (median **£79**)
Latest 1976 Steam Record Company SJ 101 **£24**

MODE FOR JOE
JOE HENDERSON (1966)

This all-star septet recording was Henderon's fifth, finest and final appearance on Blue Note under his own name until 1985's *The State Of The Tenor* pair of live albums. The titular Cedar Walton composition has become a jazz standard, and the whole record is a sophisticated distillation of the hard-bop, post-bop, modal and free-jazz trends of the era.

Rarest 1966 Blue Note BLP 4227 (mono with 'New York USA' address on blue/white labels) Discogs **£5-£137** (median **£31**) *Latest* 2014 Blue Note 75th Anniversary BST-84227 **£11**

DUSK FIRE
THE DON RENDELL/ IAN CARR 5TET (1966)

This quintet could well be the finest British jazz group of all time: their five 1960s LPs are collectors' items. *Dusk Fire*, their second, marks the point when pianist Michael Garrick joined the band and their musical style branched out to encompass a wide range of influences, including ones from India.

Rarest 1966 Columbia UK Lansdowne Series SX 6064 (mono) Discogs **£246-£670** (median **£415**) *Latest* 1972 Philips RJ-5017 (Japanese stereo release) Popsike **£185**

MEXICAN GREEN

THE TUBBY HAYES QUARTET (1968)

Edward 'Tubby' Hayes was a child prodigy and began his professional career at the age of 16, going on to be the single most important figure in the British jazz scene. Commercial and addiction problems plagued Hayes' final years, but he was able to focus enough to produce this late masterpiece. Hayes was always at his best as the single horn in a quartet setting and here, his trademark rapid-fire brilliance on tenor saxophone is showcased, alongside a gentler character when playing flute.

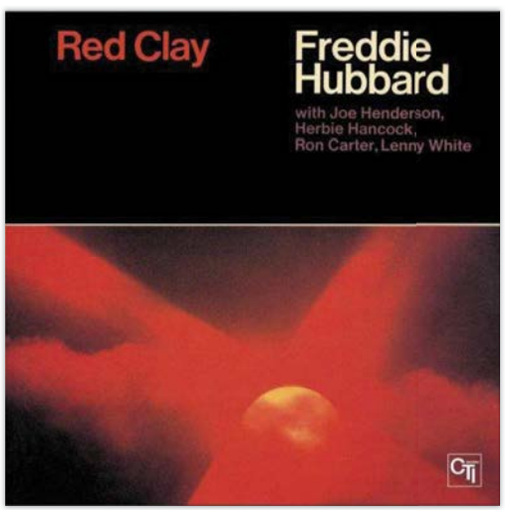
Rarest 2006 Fontana UCJU-9051 (Japanese release) **£22**
Latest 1968 Fontana SFJL 911 Discogs **£8-£71** (median **£55**)

KARMA

PHAROAH SANDERS (1969)

Pharoah Sanders (real name Farrell Sanders) is perhaps the most dedicated of John Coltrane's musical disciples. He appeared on a slew of the master's late Impulse! recordings, which led to his own sequence of spiritual-jazz sessions for the same label. *Karma* was second in the series and features the startling vocal yodelling talents of Leon Spencer on the epic half-hour-long track *The Creator Has A Master Plan*.

Rarest 1969 Impulse! A-9181 (mono promo copy with gatefold) Discogs: **£6-£141** (median **£22**)
Latest 2015 Back To Black/Impulse! AS-9181 **£18**



RED CLAY

FREDDIE HUBBARD (1970)

Trumpeter Hubbard was an established star by the time he joined producer Creed Taylor's CTI label. *Red Clay* captures perfectly the state of jazz at the start of the 1970s: acoustic jazz was in commercial decline and Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* had pointed the way to fusion with other musical forms and electronic instrumentation. Somehow, Hubbard, aided by a line-up of stars, manages to tread a tightrope between two eras.

Rarest 1970 CTI Records CTI 6001 (orange labels with gatefold) Discogs **£5-£31** (median **£14**) *Latest* 2017 CTI Records CTI 6001 (Barnes & Noble exclusive on opaque red vinyl) **£22**

THE AWAKENING

THE AHMAD JAMAL TRIO (1970)

In the sleeve notes to Miles Davis' *Steamin'*, the trumpeter is quoted as saying: "All my inspiration today comes from the Chicago pianist, Ahmad Jamal." This endorsement and Jamal's minimalist sense of time and space led to a prodigious series of trio recordings, which divided critics. This was Jamal's last regular use of acoustic piano and has found immortality as a source of samples for rap artists.

Rarest 2017 Be With Records 33⅓ rpm – BEWITH020LP (gatefold) **£22** *Latest* 1970 Impulse! AS-9194 (stereo with gatefold) Discogs **£14-£55** (median **£39**) ●

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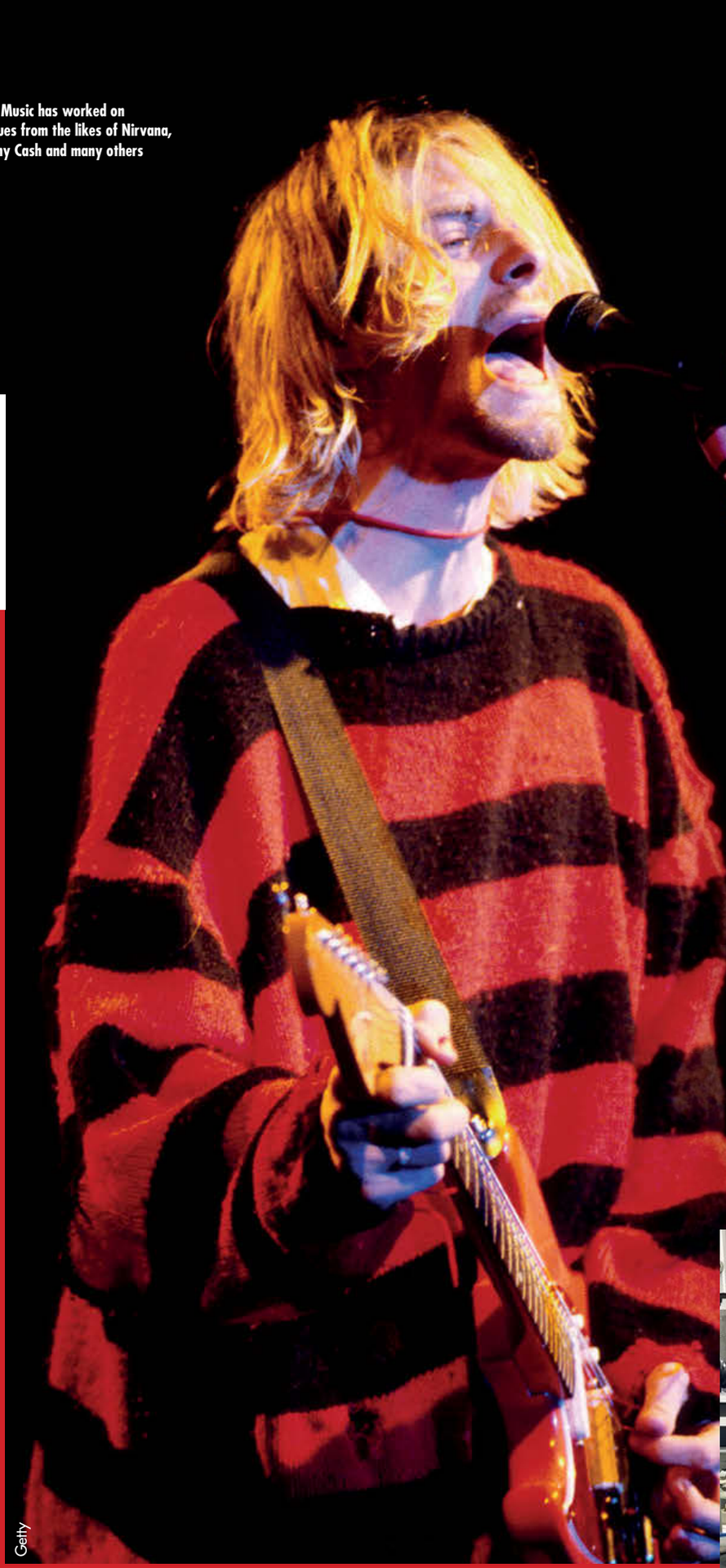

ORG Music has worked on reissues from the likes of Nirvana, Johnny Cash and many others

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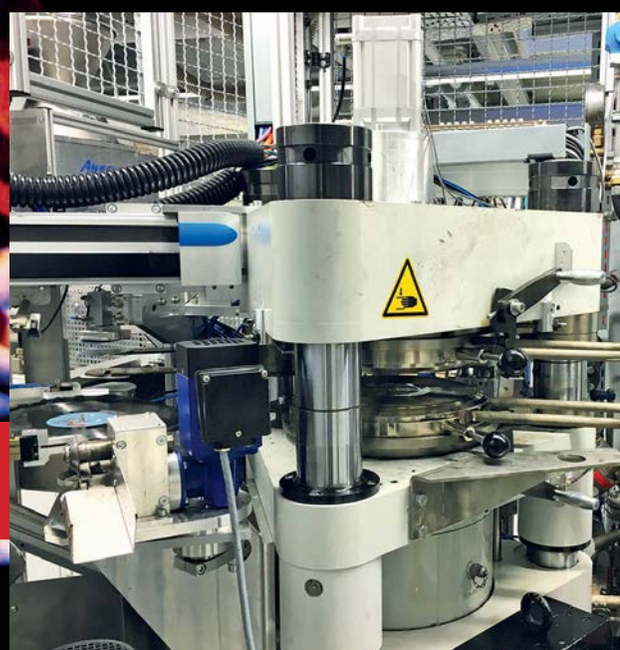
Ask any record shop owner and they'll probably have noticed this intriguing success story. It's called ORG Music, a red-hot reissues label that's got the music business asking the obvious question: how come a young indie is reissuing so many deliciously packaged and remastered classics from major-signed giants such as Miles Davis, Nirvana, John Coltrane, Johnny Cash, Sun Ra, Thelonious Monk, Weather Report, Sly And The Family Stone, Carole King, Sonic Youth, Chet Baker, Roy Orbison, Sonny Rollins, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Buzzcocks, Porno For Pyros and many others?

Yes indeed, if you're looking for a small business that encapsulates both the opportunities and the extraordinary contradictions of today's vinyl revival, you'd be hard-pressed (excuse the pun) to find a better case study than ORG Music. Based in Los Angeles, it's become the labour of love of a 29-year-old, Andrew Rossiter, who, like most successful label bosses, threw himself into the business before he was old enough to think twice.

Originally a musician from Ohio, Rossiter started out promoting punk



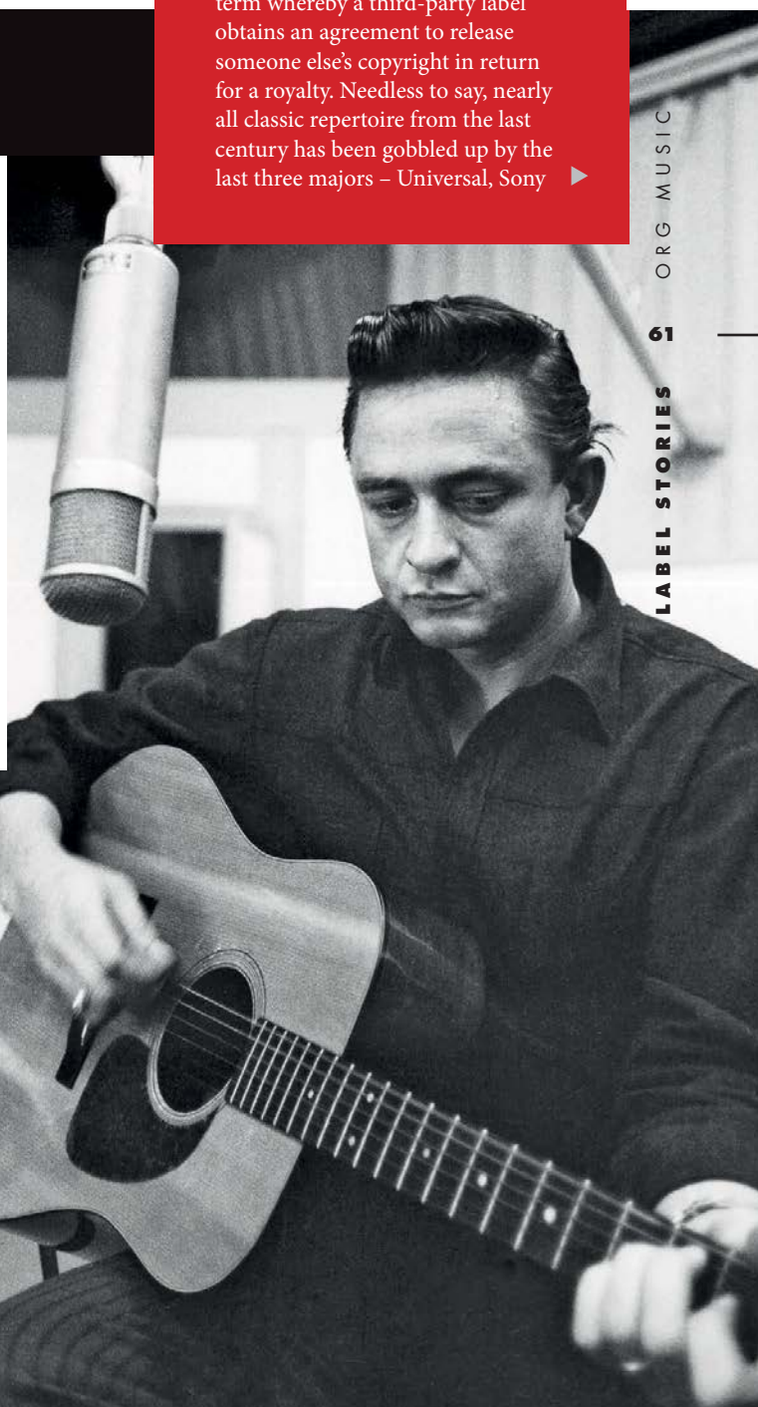
BIG REISSUE

Gareth Murphy meets Andrew Rossiter, boss of ORG Music – the Californian indie reissues label curating, re-releasing and restoring lost masterpieces back to their rightful place in the spotlight...

gigs as a teenager then, at 19, got a part-time job with WEA, plugging Atlantic, Elektra and Warner records around Chicago's college circuits. Having lived briefly in New York, he moved to Los Angeles at the age of 22 and landed a full-time job at Warner Bros. Records. It was there that two years later, in 2011, he was invited to manage ORG Music.

The imprint began in 2009, at first as an abbreviated offshoot of Original Recordings Group, and was handled largely by Warner's former vinyl chief, Jeff Bowers, the man who hired Rossiter. It had been Bowers who set up much of ORG Music's early framework – dazzling titles from Nirvana and Sonic Youth, and also the original distribution deal with WEA. When the 23-year-old Andrew Rossiter was handed the baby, nobody was expecting what was to follow. But the combination of Rossiter's youthful perfectionism and the fluke of getting his break just as the vinyl market was poised for unexpected growth, provided the happy accident that destinies are so often made of.

Andrew Rossiter is now a company shareholder, alongside two other partners, based in Washington DC. Despite a much bigger output than before, it's still very much a one-man operation: Rossiter is both the A&R chief and general manager, who calls extra hands on deck for the busy periods of the vinyl calendar. As you'd imagine, reissues are a totally different business model to producing new artists, and Rossiter's early job experiences inside Warner gave him vital contacts and knowledge of what the music industry calls "licensing" – the legal term whereby a third-party label obtains an agreement to release someone else's copyright in return for a royalty. Needless to say, nearly all classic repertoire from the last century has been gobbled up by the last three majors – Universal, Sony ▶



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Andrew Rossiter of ORG Music

Left: German plant Pallas's new vinyl presses, used on ORG releases

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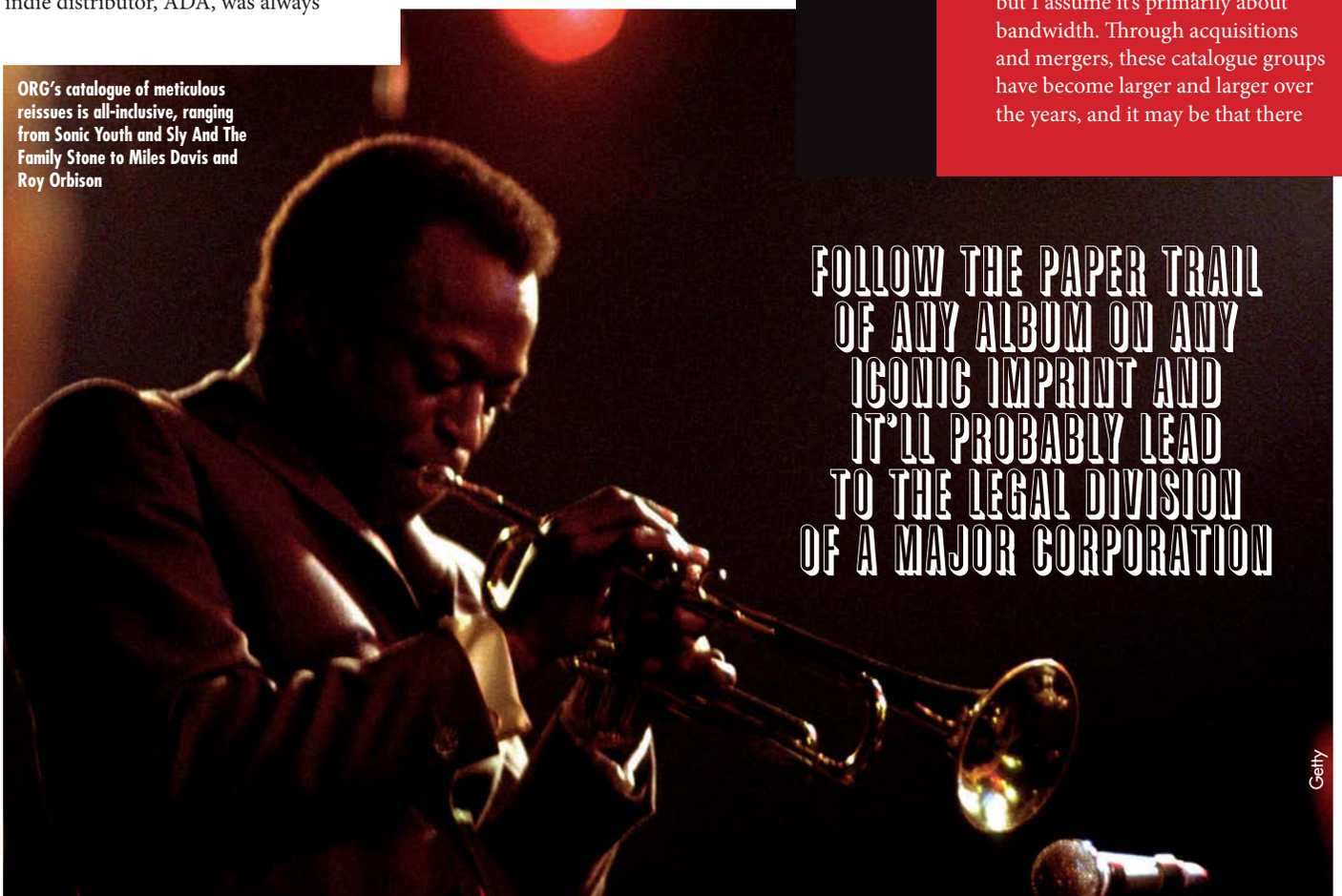
and Warner, who collectively control about 75 per cent of today's record market. Follow the paper trail of any album on any iconic imprint – Columbia, Stax, Island, Motown, A&M, Verve, Decca, Def Jam, Chrysalis, 2 Tone, Impulse, Creation, Virgin, EMI, Parlophone… and it'll probably lead to the legal division of a major corporation.

It's nonetheless fitting that ORG Music grew out of Warner's backyard. Of the Big Three, the Warner group of labels, which includes Atlantic, Warner Bros. Records, Elektra, Nonesuch, Sire, East West and Rhino, as well as America's biggest indie distributor, ADA, was always considered the coolest of the major corporations. ADA, which is now ORG Music's distributor, has become an important indie marketplace for many of the niche labels driving the US vinyl revival. Even Warner's in-house labels appear to be taking vinyl just as seriously as competitors Universal and Sony.

IN SYNC

But to understand why some of the majors aren't really doing this themselves, one must grasp the harsh complexities of today's post-crash industry. Much of today's concentration happened in the gung-ho 80s and 90s, when the CD was booming and profits had never been juicier. Back then, the objective of the publicly floated majors was to keep buying smaller labels, so their share values would keep rising. Since the CD crash, however, Universal, Sony and Warner have suffered such shrinkage and staff layoffs, they've become physically unable to work their enviable catalogues – much of which exists only in digital form. And that's why a behemoth such as Universal would let the likes of Andrew Rossiter reissue some of its classic titles on vinyl.

"I'm hesitant to make too many assumptions about the intentions of the majors," explains Rossiter, "but I assume it's primarily about bandwidth. Through acquisitions and mergers, these catalogue groups have become larger and larger over the years, and it may be that there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ORG's catalogue of meticulous reissues is all-inclusive, ranging from Sonic Youth and Sly And The Family Stone to Miles Davis and Roy Orbison

FOLLOW THE PAPER TRAIL OF ANY ALBUM ON ANY ICONIC IMPRINT AND IT'LL PROBABLY LEAD TO THE LEGAL DIVISION OF A MAJOR CORPORATION

REMASTERING FROM TAPE TO VINYL REQUIRES A CERTAIN KIND OF PERFECTIONIST

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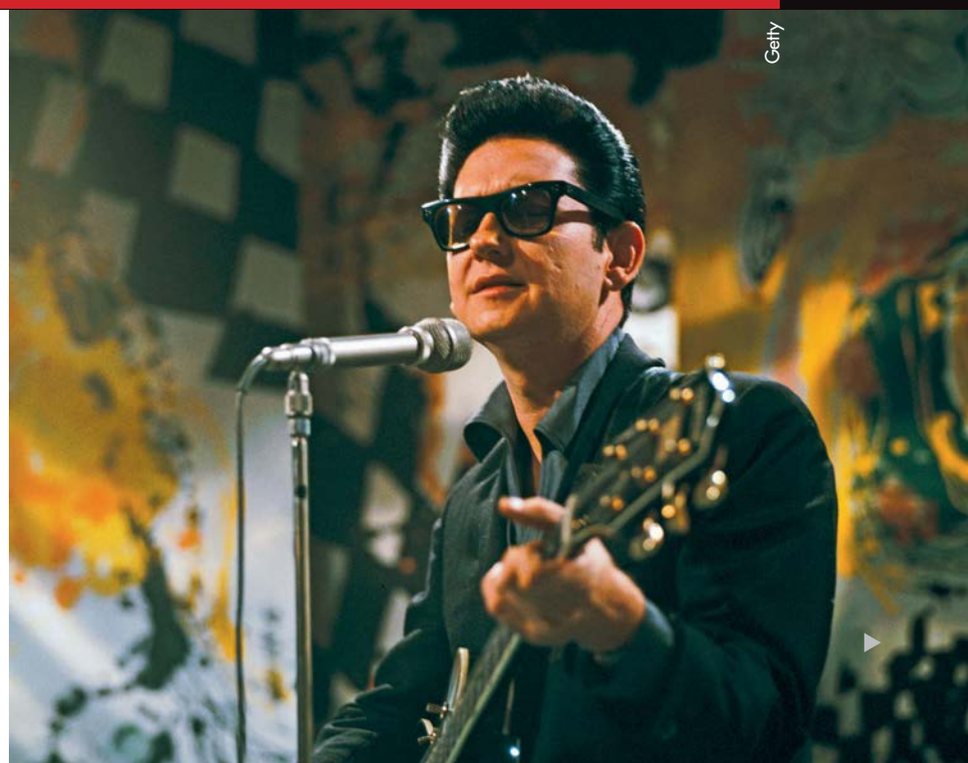
are simply too many releases for them to handle on their own. Also, vinyl requires great attention to detail and is more costly than other formats, so, allowing a quality-focused independent to reissue their music can alleviate some of that burden. Licensing has also become a way for them to derive revenue from titles that may seem too risky, or not worthwhile to press themselves."

As the vinyl market keeps growing, that attitude may be starting to change. But for the moment, the majors continue to generate their millions from other sources, notably their 360-degree contracts with teen pop stars, digital royalties, and what their legal departments call "synchronisation" – the term for leasing songs to advertisements, TV shows and blockbuster films. Compared to these types of corporate windfalls that can make upwards of £100,000 for a film, or a million for a big ad campaign, the lowly work of pressing and distributing obscure vinyl is peanut-picking. In fact, the majors have become such copyright agencies, many of their legal departments have adopted the revealing title of Special Marketing. Beehives of jurists sift and dispatch a constant flood of email requests from advertisement agencies, compilation labels, film and TV producers, website designers, mobile-phone operators – anyone and everyone who needs one of their songs.

The majors are doing what they can with what they have. But anyone who's ever worked for one of these industry leviathans is not expecting Universal, Sony or even Warner to navigate the music business back to market recovery alone. That mission is also in the hands of younger, more versatile independents who are taking the biggest A&R risks and addressing the most discerning tastemakers in society. And this rule even applies to vinyl reissues, because the meticulous work of remastering from tape to vinyl and rebuilding lost artwork, requires a certain kind of perfectionist. And the purists, collectors and musicians ▶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Billie Holiday and Sun Ra are two artists whose Black Lion label releases have been reissued by ORG Music

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For the past three Record Store Days, ORG has reissued a Sun Records compilation

who buy these types of records, really do expect the highest all-round standards.

"We've reissued three of Thelonious Monk's Columbia albums; *Criss-Cross*, *Solo Monk* and *Underground*, for which Sony/Legacy provided analogue tapes, our preferred source," explains Rossiter. "As we do with many of our jazz releases, we had Bernie Grundman master from tape, which we then pressed on 180-gram vinyl at Pallas Group in Germany." For those who don't recognise the reference, Bernie Grundman is a Hollywood-based titan who began his long career at A&M in the 1970s and went on to master *Thriller*, *Purple Rain* and just about every major artist in the business. He's probably the most respected and experienced mastering engineer in music history.

DIAMONDS AND PEARLS

As for Pallas, it's a highly reputed plant in north west Germany, albeit a rather complicated choice of manufacturer for a Californian indie such as ORG Music.

"We go to great lengths," Rossiter emphasises. "When it comes to making great-s*ounding* records, Bernie and Pallas has become our winning combination. As for the artwork, we found mint-condition copies of those old Thelonius Monk pressings, we took high-resolution scans and had our designer rebuild the covers to match the originals as faithfully as possible."

The Grundman/Pallas formula has restored a string of old pearls back to their former glory. In fact, these reissues are arguably better-sounding than ever. For example, there are four John Coltrane classics: *Coltrane Jazz*, *Coltrane's Sound*, *My Favorite Things* and *Olé Coltrane*. From Ornette Coleman, there's *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, *Free Jazz* and *Science Fiction*. From Freddie Hubbard, there's *First Light*, *Red Clay* and *Straight Life*. Others include *There's A Riot Goin' On* by Sly And The Family Stone, *Odyssey* by James Blood Ulmer, *Concierto* by Jim Hall, *Black Codes (From The Underground)* by Wynton Marsalis, and Weather Report's self-titled 1971 début.

TROPICAL TASTE

One Grundman/Pallas title happens to be one of my all-time favourite Desert Island Discs: *Stone Flower*, the 1970 classic by bossa-nova pioneer, Antônio Carlos Jobim. For curious spirits unfamiliar with tropical jazz, I should warn you that its tangy mix of Brazil and California may at first taste like melted cheese. But once you get inside Jobim's

WHATEVER THE TITLE OR AUDIENCE, THE OBJECTIVE IS ALWAYS TO GO FURTHER THAN JUST REISSUING OUT-OF-PRESS VINYL MUSIC

Getty

ingenious soundscapes, *Stone Flower* becomes a feast of pocket sunshine. Rock aficionados may recognise its stirring title track from Santana's cover version on *Caravanserai* – an indication of *Stone Flower's* major influence on psychedelic jazz-rock. My favourite track, however, is *Children's Games* – it's guaranteed to skip around your heart for life.

You really can't fault ORG Music on its A&R credentials. For such a young and small label, their catalogue is already a connoisseur's emporium. But of course, in today's shrunken market, such extremism presents its own challenges.

Although indie stores remain ORG Music's primary outlet, Rossiter has had to find audiences in different ways. For example, America's biggest book chain, Barnes & Noble, stocks many of these highbrow jazz records simply because bookworms recognise what these titles mean and can afford the sometimes hefty price tags.

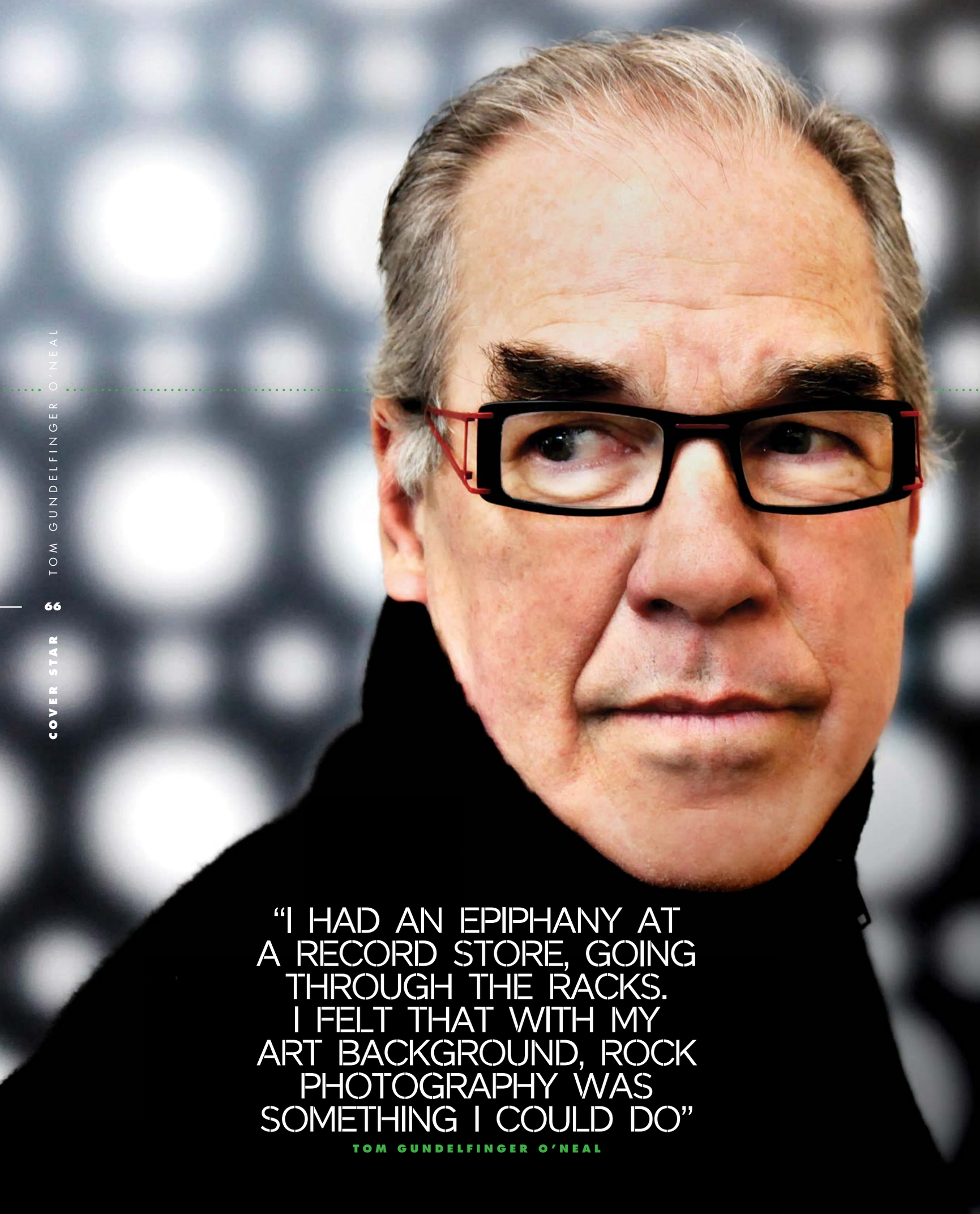
"We always have to keep pricing in mind," sighs Rossiter. "Some customers have come to expect a level of quality that is simply not possible without charging a premium. It comes down to the master source, the engineer, the pressing plant and even the printer. We have to make these decisions on a title-to-title basis; not every release is going to appeal to that same audiophile customer and not every customer is willing to pay for that level of quality."

For the last three editions of Record Store Day, ORG Music had issued a new Sun Records compilation of deep cuts from the likes of Howlin' Wolf, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Rufus Thomas, Roy Orbison, Charlie Rich, Alvin Robinson and others. Store owners vote for the tracks, the RSD organisation helps with the concept artwork, and as a community, they launch the finished record together.

For these types of special editions, ORG Music sells out all 4,000 records – healthy numbers in today's economy. Sun Records is one of the few independently owned catalogues left – a factor which may explain why they've become one of Rossiter's most loyal collaborators. The same applies to Black Lion, an old jazz catalogue that's also managed to stay independent. From Black Lion, Rossiter has reissued various beauties such as *Outer Spaceways Incorporated* by Sun Ra, or *At Storyville* by Billie Holiday.

As with all record labels operating in today's complex and depressed market, ORG Music has no choice but to look wide and adapt each project to its own special needs. Whatever the actual title or target audience, the overarching objective is always to go further than just reissuing out-of-press vinyl. Fully utilising state-of-the-art analogue technology and a more specialist approach to A&R and publicity, all these records are meant to sound, feel and play better than their original ancestors.

As such, Andrew Rossiter does not see his daily work as junkyard surplus or tawdry reproduction. He's more like a specialist antiques dealer who recognises, restores and organises the music-business equivalent of openings, exhibitions and auctions. It's the expensive, high-risk business of saving masterpieces from obscurity by giving them a new lease of life. The mission is to return sunken treasure to its rightful audience. ●



"I HAD AN EPIPHANY AT A RECORD STORE, GOING THROUGH THE RACKS. I FELT THAT WITH MY ART BACKGROUND, ROCK PHOTOGRAPHY WAS SOMETHING I COULD DO"

TOM GUNDELFINGER O'NEAL

TOM GUNDELFINGER O'NEAL

Photographer Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal was at the heart of the West Coast psychedelic-music boom in the 1960s, shooting album covers and portraits for rock royalty such as Jimi Hendrix, Joni Mitchell and Jim Morrison. **Teri Saccone** meets the man behind the lens…

Despite 2017 marking his 50th year as a photographer and sleeve artist, there's a childlike enthusiasm radiating from Tom O'Neal that's infectious. His more-than-70 album covers and rock portraits captured the essence of the late-60s West Coast psychedelic scene. He shot visceral images of Jimi, Jagger, Joni, Janis and Jim, and O'Neal's innate ability to fuse an instant rapport with musicians was a key component of his success.

Long Live Vinyl became immersed in Tom's world at his Monterey, California offices, decorated with his iconic images and Gold albums – and we were immediately charmed by his genuine warmth and high energy levels.

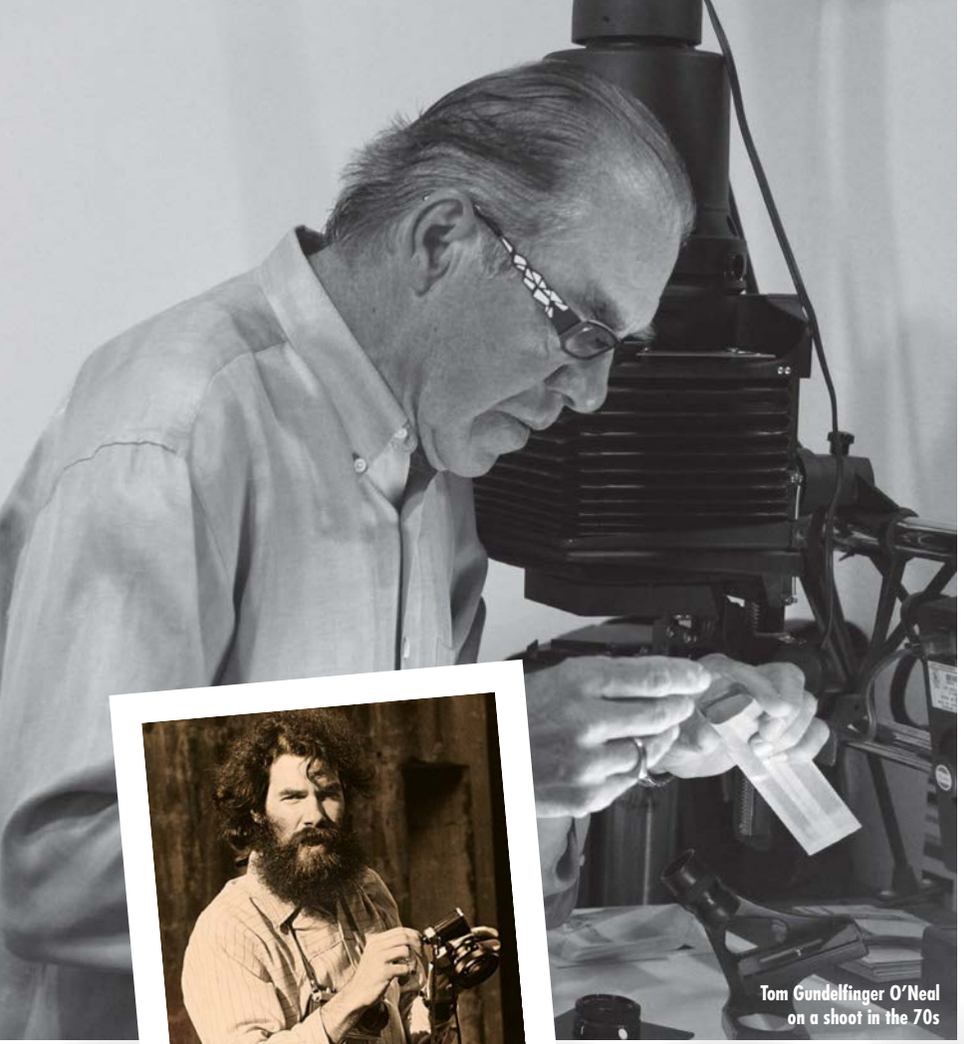
Raised in Beverly Hills, Tom relocated to Chicago to study art at university in 1967; he returned to California to attend the Monterey Pop Festival, which proved to be his professional anointment. He utilised his camera "more as a paintbrush than a tool for photo journalism". When he began, he went by his family surname of Gundelfinger, before marrying and taking his wife's name, O'Neal.

"I went to Monterey Pop with the intention of becoming a rock photographer, because I had an epiphany at a record store, going through the racks. I felt that with my art background, this was something I could do.

"I came out of that store knowing this is what I wanted, even if I didn't know how I'd get there. Monterey was the launchpad for Otis, Hendrix, Janis and others. DA Pennebaker's film made them international superstars. For me, that festival was the intersection of serendipity and good luck. I moved to LA in '68 and was soon working on album covers, and the transition of my career from the last night of Monterey Pop to the following year was huge. By the time I'd see Jimi again in '68 at the Fillmore, I was a bona-fide rock photographer."

O'Neal's innate exuberance and dedication to his craft quickly won over many in the industry. He explains that it was never a matter of just showing up for a shoot with his camera and then clicking away. Instead, it was about sparking connections with his legendary subjects, finding a way to earn their trust, then procuring pictures. In the supersonic-paced world we now inhabit, this slow-burn approach seems personal and synergistic, and his nuanced images bear this out.

Also, the processes O'Neal and his contemporaries used for album art were handmade ones – there were no computers or digital tools at their disposal. It was, as he aptly describes it, "very organic". O'Neal admits experimenting with these pioneering techniques was a process of trial and error, as there were no manuals on how to achieve the effects he desired.



Tom Gundelfinger O'Neal on a shoot in the 70s

Steppenwolf, whose *Steppenwolf 7* and *Steppenwolf Live* album covers O'Neal shot

JIM MORRISON

"Despite there being so many barriers around him (at a TV show taping), I was able to make a connection with him… We talked briefly about his poetry and, although subdued, he was likeable. Very different than his powerful onstage character."

His most celebrated cover, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Déjà Vu*, illustrates this 'analogue' approach. "We used a camera that was 150 years old," he explains of the iconic sleeve. "I worked several months to perfect the tintype, a daguerreotype technique that they posed for with minutes of absolute stillness. It was Stephen Stills' idea to do it in that Civil War-era theme.

"Years later, I asked him why he was so fascinated with having an antique-looking 1860s-era album cover. He said it was because he 'totally admired the rebellious spirit of the Confederacy'. Stephen is a Southerner, and dressed as a Confederate for the picture."

At the time, notorious music executive David Geffen was the band's co-manager and was anxious to get the much-anticipated second album released. "They were huge and the album had pre-sold almost a million copies. But the band didn't want to rush it and wanted an authentic cover," Tom recalls. "The lettering was gold-stamped and was done via hand application for every single copy. None of it done by machine. The simulated leather was made in the only paper mill in the US that could produce that tremendous leather-like feel. The album was extremely successful, too." It sold in excess of eight million units, and the high visual aesthetic was matched by its transcendentally timeless music.

JIMI HENDRIX

"I recognised him in the audience, so I shot him in the crowd. Onstage, he was the epitome of cool. When he lit his guitar, it was like a beautiful sacrifice to the gods of rock 'n' roll. The stage was really elevated; I was lucky to get the one shot I did."

CREATIVE FREEDOM

O'Neal cherishes the friendships he's made (some ephemeral, others still existing today) with the likes of Neil Young and Graham Nash. "I treasured both the connectivity to some of these wonderful people and the freedom I had," he recalls.

O'Neal favoured a collaborative work process. "I'd pick a place that made the artist feel comfortable," he says. "I'd shoot in black and white and colour. Then I'd process all the film and go meet with the band, preferably in the studio, because they'd likely still be recording. So I'd set up my slide projector, take a blank album cover and project my transparencies onto that. We'd look through the slides and we'd come up with ideas, and it worked great."

Although he had a wild thatch of hair, which he adorned with a bandana – "to keep my hair out of my eyes, rather than a fashion statement", O'Neal asserts that he was less a hippie and more of an artistic bohemian: "I was educated at private schools and didn't buy into the whole hippie vernacular of 'far out', etc, as grammar and syntax were important to me."

Because he grew up in Beverly Hills amongst the progeny of both television and film stars of the day, O'Neal did not treat rock stars as the

mythical creatures others might. "I was a paperboy as a kid and we lived amongst the Hollywood elite of that time, so it was natural for me to not be starstruck by these musicians, despite being enthralled by their incredible talents."

O'Neal's own values informed some of his business choices: "If I felt a band might be asking me to create something that was not respectful to women or had questionable taste, I refused." An example of this is Steely Dan's debut *Can't Buy A Thrill*. Tom worked closely with their former label ABC/Dunhill as an art director, so was approached to do the cover – but refused because the band adopted their name from a dildo in William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*. Admittedly, Tom had not heard the touchstone album prior to his refusal. "I'm a huge fan of them, and had I heard the album, I'd not have passed on them, as I was put off only by their name," he admits.

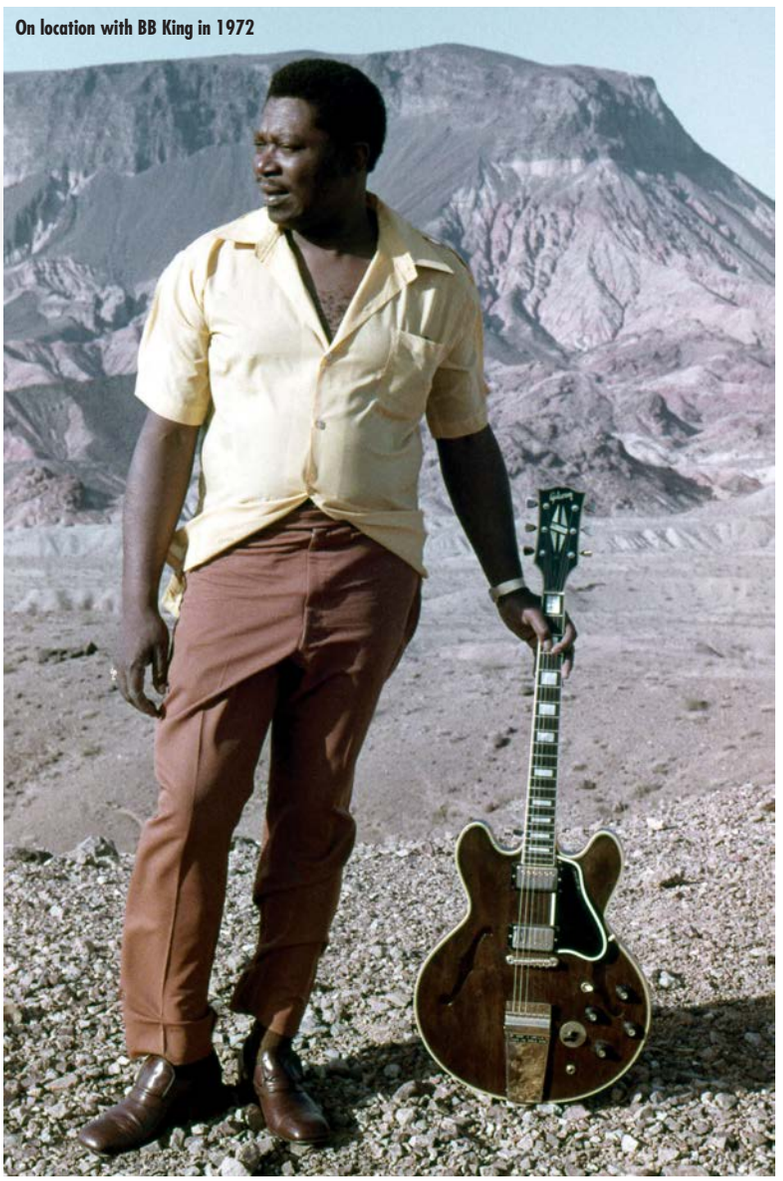
STARDUST MEMORIES

These days, O'Neal works largely on commercial projects. He's photographed two US Presidents and a string of high-end advertising campaigns. As we go to press, he is readying his book, *From Monterey Pop To Déjà Vu And Beyond: Memoirs Of A Rock 'N' Roll Photographer*. The rough-hewn cover, adorned with masking tape, will remain looking like a mockup. It's informal and approachable, like Tom himself. "The book is going to start with Monterey and will cover psychedelic art in our culture and how it evolved. It will explore my view of living through that era," says Tom. "There was some really cool art that came out of that time, and these days, I'm still doing cool stuff."

JONI MITCHELL

"I was introduced to her by David Crosby. She played me her as-then unreleased album *Song To A Seagull* on acoustic guitar and halfway through, I had to put down my camera – I was moved to tears. She was special because she was so gifted, but so not a diva. I taught her to drive a stick-shift."

Besides the imminent book, O'Neal is a spokesperson for the 50th anniversary of Monterey Pop, with a new festival marking the occasion in September. Lastly, what does he think comprises a great album cover? "You had to hook them with uniqueness, shock or beauty," he says. "The display racks only allowed the top 25 per cent to be visible, so you'd have to make that arresting enough so they'd pull it out, turn it round and buy it." At his core a deeply emotional soul, O'Neal concludes: "When you create from the heart, you touch a heart."



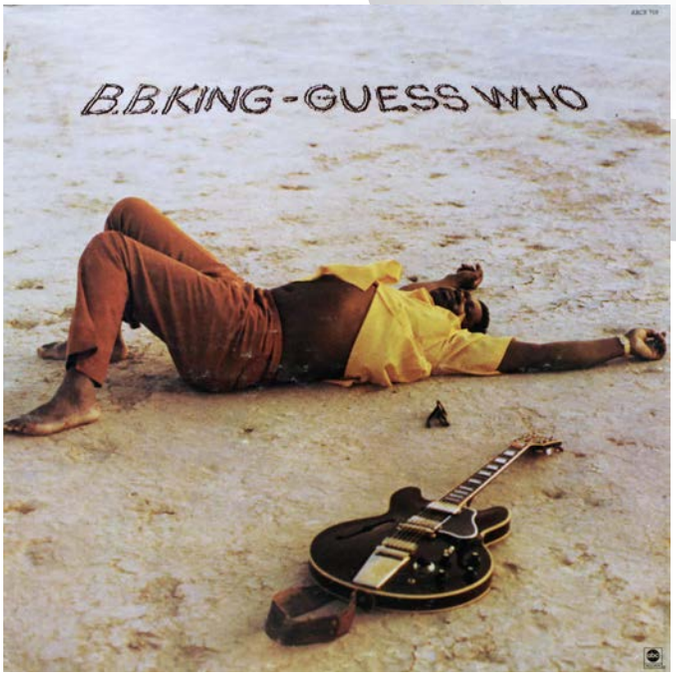
On location with BB King in 1972

> "THE BOOK WILL COVER PSYCHEDELIC ART IN OUR CULTURE AND HOW IT EVOLVED"
>
> **TOM GUNDELFINGER O'NEAL**

Shooting Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Déjà Vu*

THE ESSENTIAL COVERS

TOM GUNDELFINGER O'NEAL



GUESS WHO
BB KING
1972

O'Neal brought the blues legend to ground zero, flat on his back. You can't get more salt-of-the-earth than this shot: "We rented a car and picked him up at the Aladdin Hotel in Vegas," remembers O'Neal. "He was a Southern gentleman. We took him into the desert to find an interesting spot, but first he had to buy a little hooch at a 7-Eleven en route, which he drank in the back seat. We got to a dry lake bed with a painted sky and it was looking cool – and he was so relaxed that he fell asleep, and I got the shot with him and Lucille (King's legendary guitar). He had so much fun that day, he didn't want to go back to Vegas. He had so much humility. A wonderful experience."

DÉJÀ VU
CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG
1970

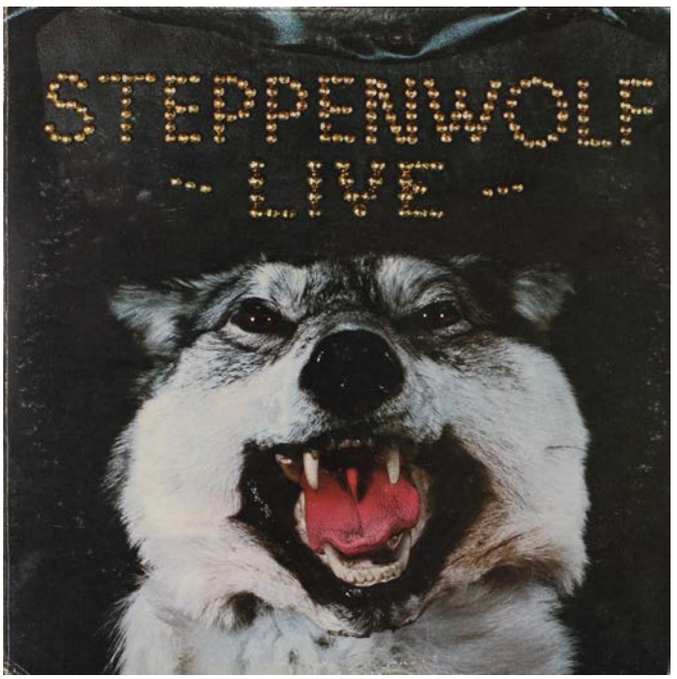
As meticulously shot as this cover is, it has been said by Stephen Stills that the album itself took a marathon 800 hours in the studio to perfect. O'Neal has some special memories of the shoot: "The title had not existed for that album until after my cover was done. That was a very special thing. It feels magical."

HP LOVECRAFT II
HP LOVECRAFT
1968

Although this was a short-lived, lesser-known band, Tom brought a hallucinatory eloquence to the project, with the group notorious for their psychedelic folk-rock and substantial chemical appetites. "That cover shot was taken at the beach, which you would never know, and the colour transparency came from that shoot," says O'Neal. "We kept extracting all the graphic possibilities that came from that. That was allegedly the first time an album was recorded with the entire band tripping on LSD. There's a texture of shower glass on there – the effects were intended to be trippy. I manipulated the colours, too. Graphically, it was a lot of fun and the record company gave me *carte blanche*."

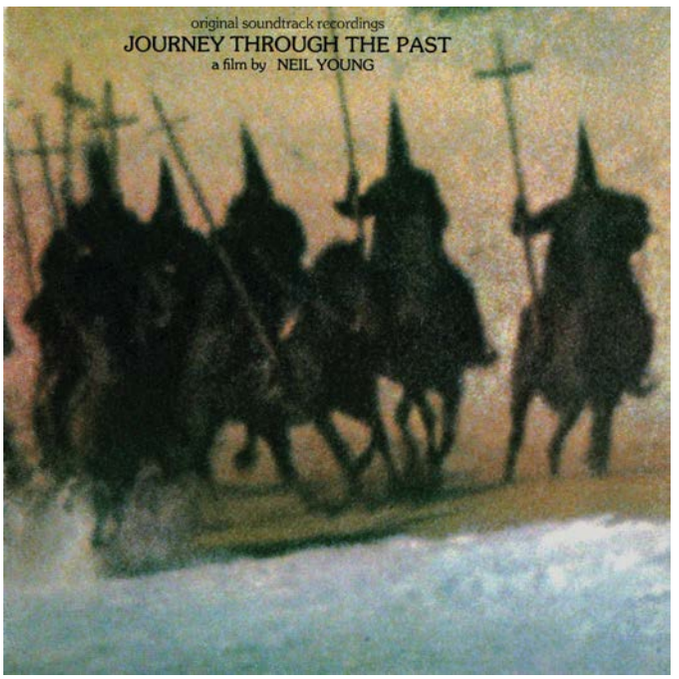
STEPPENWOLF 7
STEPPENWOLF
1970

O'Neal collaborated with the celebrated Canadian rockers on nine albums, including this one (their fifth, despite the title). "The cover was created by a series of layers, as you would today using Photoshop," says O'Neal. "I made a collage of the main photo, and the two rings at sunset were shot at different places at different times. It's not just a typical decoupage job. These are very expensive dye transfers, very strong emulsions used. I was able to both shoot and design it, as I was given so much freedom… The inner sleeve has a *Game Of Thrones* feel. The record company liked it so much, they made a billboard out of it."



STEPPENWOLF LIVE
STEPPENWOLF
1970

"My first take on the cover with a fake wolf was rejected by their label," remembers O'Neal, "so I was told to get a real wolf, and found one in the Valley. The wolf was really vicious and was known to attack, so I was warned to stay outside the pen. I got photos of him stalking a chipmunk outside his cage, but they wanted the wolf coming at you head-on. All I could think of was, 'I'll be a one-armed photographer if I get close', so I borrowed a stuffed wolf and photographed it that way, painted it up to look real, and it looks pretty menacing."

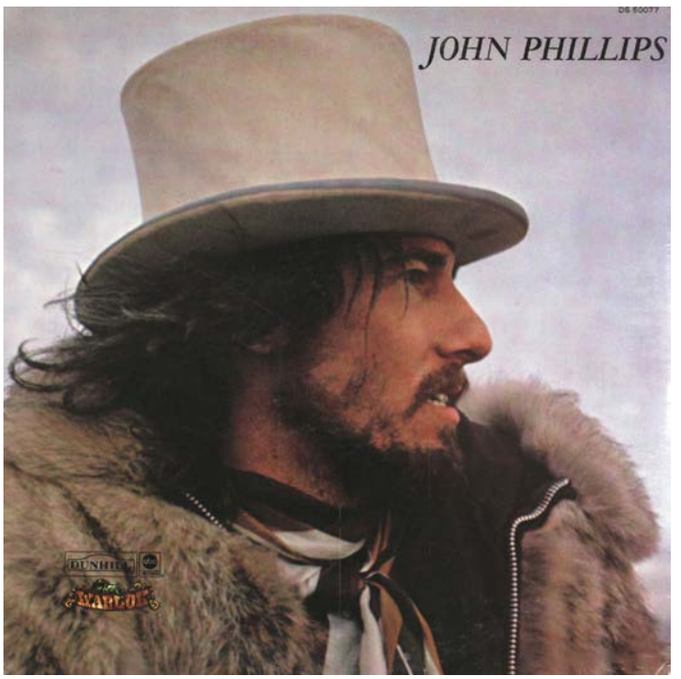


JOURNEY THROUGH THE PAST
NEIL YOUNG
1972

A soundtrack album from the film with Neil Young, with music from Buffalo Springfield and outtakes from the *Harvest* sessions. "Neil called me and had ideas for that," says O'Neal. "We took a frame from the film and made a Polaroid using a very early format of a Polaroid printer… It's a pretty strong cover."

4 WAY STREET
CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG
1971

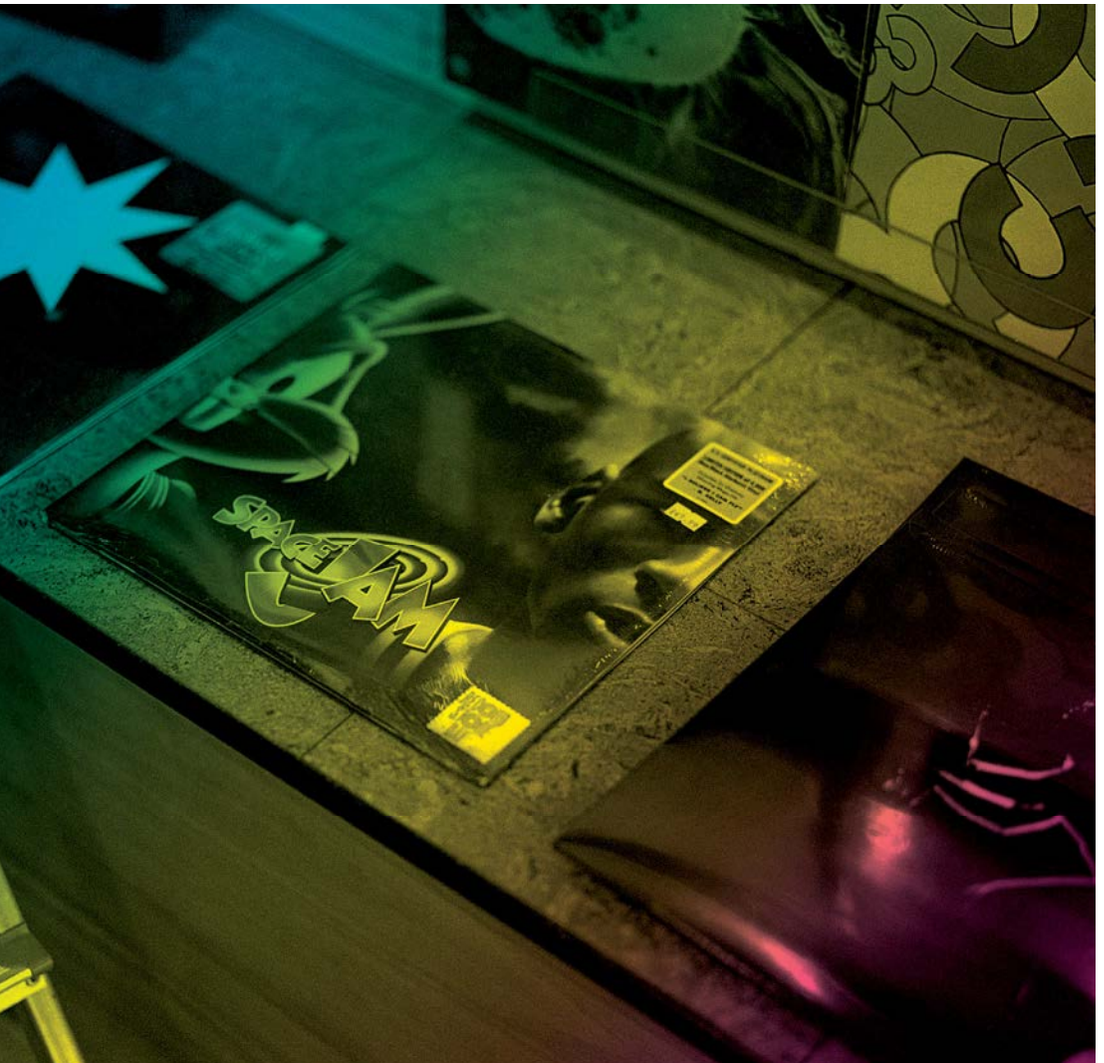
The cover for this live album by the all-conquering supergroup was shot by both Tom and his dear friend Henry Diltz. "We used a Plexiglass box to display the photos," says O'Neal. "We taped them on the box and used dye-transfer transparencies, with the colours very saturated. It was a very expensive and arduous task to bring all the photo effects together."



JOHN PHILLIPS
JOHN, THE WOLF KING OF L.A.
1970

The leader and backing singer of West Coast vocal sensations The Mamas & The Papas, Phillips was a notorious figure and, ironically, the only musician O'Neal didn't really connect with. "The hat he wore for the shoot was a gift to him from Leon Russell," O'Neal says. The album received major kudos from critics for its songwriting and contributions from members of The Wrecking Crew, who recorded it. ●

DRIFT
CLOSED


SPACE JAM

P.OME

DEVON SENT

DRIFT, TOTNES

Drift Record Shop, in the Devon market town of Totnes, has launched its own magazine and festival without abandoning its ethos of supporting emerging acts. **Gary Walker** finds out more…

When Rupert Morrison took up a job at the tiny World Video & Music shop in the beautiful Devon town of Totnes, he surely can't have envisaged where it would lead him. Two decades later, he's at the helm of one of the UK's most pioneering independent record shops, championing vinyl releases from some of the world's brightest unheralded talents. Drift Record Shop even has its own music festival and a free newspaper.

Now in its second home in this alternative-spirited market town at the mouth of the River Dart, Drift is a record shop that would grace any of the nation's major cities. "I started working at World Music & Video when I was about 16," recalls Rupert. "A few years later, around the turn of the century, when I was about 19 and at art college, my parents had some redundancy money and were looking to invest in something. I'd been offered the shop by the previous owners, but I wasn't in a position to buy it. My folks asked if they were still interested…

"We got the shop and I realised fairly quickly that calling a shop World Music & Video limited what we could do, and people didn't realise it was a record shop. So we rebranded as Drift, because I was running the Drift record label and that gave it a spiritual home.

"It was a shop about the size of a living room. One of the first big successes for us was the *Buena Vista Social Club* album… it just resonated so perfectly with the audience we had.

"At the time, we sold a handful of CDs a week and couldn't really get hold of vinyl – there wasn't a huge amount of new vinyl being pressed, but we sold shoeboxes full of *Buena Vista Social Club* for a while. I'd be fascinated if someone could tell us what kind of numbers we did on that record. That was a big 'the system works' moment."

Six years ago, the store moved from its humble, somewhat pokey confines to a larger store at the top of the town's steep, quirky high street. Today, Drift is one of the most handsome record shops in the UK. Its elegant, black-painted front with gold logo and floor-to-ceiling windows enclose a double corner-unit shop, stacked with a lovingly curated, constantly updated selection of new releases and infused with the heady aroma of fresh coffee from its in-house cafe. "We'd been looking to move for ages," says Rupert. "We got lucky in identifying the move towards vinyl. It was something we'd always been trying to stock more of, but we were able to show labels and distributors we were pretty committed to it, and off the back of that, we were able to stock more and more. Finally, the shop space came up and we went for it two-footed.

"In terms of ethos, we only have a couple. Firstly, people did such damage to the reputation of record shops for decades that people are afraid to go into them, they're intimidated. So the first thing is, 'Don't be a dick', welcome people in and make sure they feel as if they're being attended to and their custom is appreciated.

"In terms of curating the shop, it's just a rolling schedule. *Carrie & Lowell* by Sufjan Stevens was our record of

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> **RUPERT MORRISON**

All pictures Jay Bing

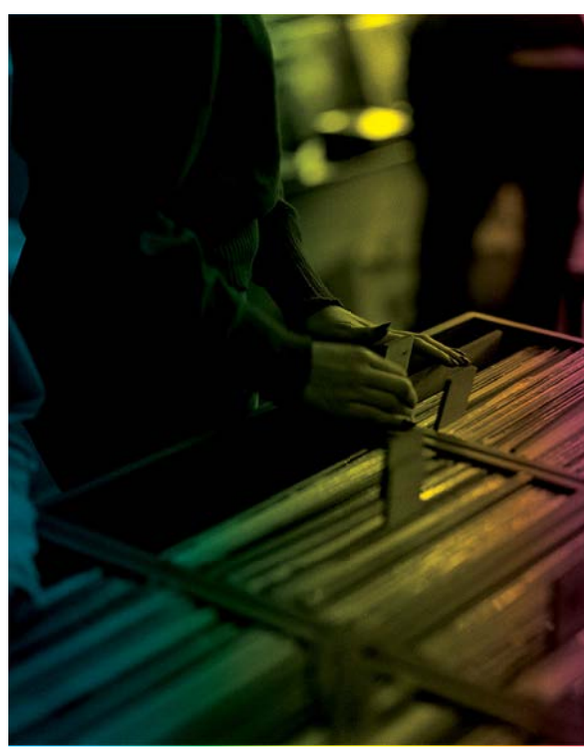
the year last year, and it's still just a breathtaking, extraordinary listen, but I can't stock it all the time. I'm sat here at the moment with invoices in front of me for Mark Lanegan, The Raincoats reissue, Blondie, At The Drive-In, the Nick Cave reissues, mountains of Slowdive, Mac DeMarco… we want to support our friends at labels, music makers, distributors, we want to listen to everything and make sure we're giving a damn good boost to the work they're doing and get the music out there."

Indeed, the proportion of Drift's stock that's made up of new releases is striking. While Beatles, Stones, Dylan and Bowie reissues and large second-hand sections are many shops' necessary bread and butter, Rupert and the team have bravely filled their racks with albums by emerging bands and cult heroes. This is an indie paradise in all senses of the term and on our visit, releases by Thundercat, Dirty Projectors, Nadia Reid, Father John Misty, British Sea Power and Ty Segall take pride of place on the display units. In a town with a population of only 8,000, that could be considered a risky strategy, but it's paid off for Drift. "Being passionate about it and revolving through stuff is important to us," says Rupert, whose own lightbulb moment came when he first heard Nirvana's *Nevermind*, aged 11. "Every time you come into the shop it looks different – and that's the aim. People's awareness, particularly in the culture post 6 Music not going out of business… people are into listening to new things, it feels like a positive time. A part of the business model is collectors and fetish… would we have sold as many copies of the Slowdive album if it wasn't on a limited silver pressing? Or sold hundreds of the Radiohead [*OK Computer* reissue] record in 39 minutes, if it hadn't been a limited blue-vinyl pressing? We could have sold 10 times what we did. It's not something I'm particularly supportive of, it's part of that fetish culture, but it keeps us in business and means we get to buy in a bunch of Doug Tuttle's record, which is very good.

"We go as deep as we can while trying to stay informed on stuff. A central ground of interesting, progressive music-makers seems to be where we lie."

Record Store Day 2017 was the busiest day in Drift's history, although Rupert has mixed feelings about the direction the event has taken and questions how much it supports emerging artists in need of publicity. "It was bonkers," he says of the shop's busiest day yet. "We didn't put on any events this year, because we wanted to focus on the best possible shopping experience. We got more people than ever through the door. We traded about 30 per cent up; the online trade on Friday night was about 45 per cent up on last year, which was already the best-ever day we'd done.

"In terms of its ability to generate money, as long as you reinvest it in stuff that's cool, I'm really into it, but Record Store Day in general for me has lost its sparkle. It's become too general and it's



catering for too many people. The more shops you get in, the more it's dulled down. The Danny Brown release [*Ain't It Funny*] was one of the best releases, but I think I've still got a copy left, yet the David Bowie releases… it's catering to the biggest possible audience, and it's great to have the BBC as a partner because of the coverage, but the amount of times they were talking about something really interesting, or progressive young music-makers – someone like Rose Dougall and Toy doing something together, or The Proper Ornaments reissues… that would be great. Even Sun Ra, Priests or Loop, all these really interesting out-there reissues, but it's kind of the same-old, same-old.

"I don't want to get too stuck up and say Record Shop Day should just be for pompous old record-store twats, but I think it's missing a trick. One of the most disheartening things for me was quite early on, one of the guys who'd been in the queue and picked up everything he was after, got to the counter and said, 'Thanks, great… see you next year!'.

"There's nothing less charming than that, 'support a local indie record shop' – as if we're a charity – but if you just turn up once a year and buy everything else wherever you buy it, we won't be here. There won't be a Record Store Day and there won't be Father John Misty deluxe limited editions and Dirty Projectors and all these amazing records we support through various cycles, before they become the Elbow people are interested in buying."

> "ONE OF THE MOST DISHEARTENING RECORD STORE DAY THINGS FOR ME WAS WHEN ONE OF THE GUYS WHO'D BEEN IN THE QUEUE AND PICKED UP EVERYTHING HE WAS AFTER, GOT TO THE COUNTER AND SAID, 'THANKS, GREAT… SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!'"
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> **RUPERT MORRISON**

DELUXE EDITION

The shop's success has also given birth to the passionately written and authoritative free newspaper *Deluxe*, an enthusiastic mouthpiece for new bands and indie record stores. "We cap the adverts and keep it very specific to our indie friends," says Rupert. "It's a nice opportunity to talk to music-makers, artists, record-shop owners and record buyers, but it's always very specifically about record shops. What it highlights is that record shops are very important to people. They're the start of the journey and without them, lots of people would be in a very different place in their life – although probably better off."

Sea Change Festival, now in its second year, is another offspring of the Drift family, transforming Totnes into an alternative-music hotbed across several venues on August Bank Holiday weekend. The 2017 edition features a line-up including Temples, Blanck Mass, Gold Panda, Ryley Walker and Aldous Harding. "We're very fond of Totnes," says Rupert, "but I came from spending a chunk of time in London, where I saw bands every night and felt very much part of the music scene, helping out with labels… To come here and there be absolutely nothing, I found it a bit stark. We started putting on shows, like Hiss Golden Messenger and William Tyler. William and [Hiss Golden Messenger mainman] Michael Taylor were touring together and stayed at my parents' house and my dad bent their ear about the Civil War all night…

"We put on Date Palms, Black Twig Pickers, Steve Dunn and all these people before they'd really popped, and we'd get really shitty attendances… Then we did a show for Record Store Day, where we reached out to Ninja Tune and did a dual party, and we sold 300 tickets without announcing who it was – and I was like, 'Oh right, it's spectacle, that's what people need'. I realised it needs something much bigger to get people to come along. We ran the first festival and luckily sold out, and this year, the tickets are selling twice as fast, which is great."

Returning to Drift, we ask what Rupert attributes the recent vinyl boom and his store's growing success to. "There are a bunch of reasons why people have got into buying vinyl. There's fetish culture, people wanting the limited elements… with the At The Drive-In record, it seems almost everyone who's bought it has bought the purple copy as well as the CD or a black-vinyl copy; I think a lot of people are buying these limited pressings and not necessarily playing them. I find it frustrating – records are made to be heard – but it's a structure that's still enabling labels to release music. If people are listening on Spotify and not listening to the vinyl, then I guess it isn't any of my business. I'd love to think it's just because vinyl's fucking cool and sounds better, but I suppose it's a rich tapestry of reasons…" ●

Classic Album
FLEETWOOD MAC
RUMOURS

"Art is only a way of expressing pain," reckoned John Lennon – and with *Rumours*, Fleetwood Mac took massive hurt and polished it into a *tour de force* of pop-rock that helped define the 1970s. *Michael Leonard* looks back at a 40-million seller that has transcended genre and fanbase, and whose legend is half-based on the fractious relationships and excess that surrounded its very making…

FLEETWOOD MAC
RUMOURS

NOW IT'S PERSONAL
The album was going to be called *Yesterday's Gone*, an apt enough description of crumbling relationships, but it was John McVie who coined the final title, said Christine McVie: "We were all writing journals and diaries about each other. But we didn't quite realise that until all the songs were strung together."

ANNIE/MAC
Fleetwood and Nicks are paired on the front cover, but weren't an item: Nicks was still dealing with the decline of her relationship with Buckingham. However, their relationship started to grow at the *Rolling Stone* cover shoot soon after, when all five were shot in bed together by Annie Leibovitz.

OLD BALLS
Mick Fleetwood's wooden 'balls' were toilet-chain pulls he'd wrenched from a lavatory. They became a lucky charm and soon hung from his trousers at most live shows. When the originals were lost, Fleetwood had replicas made. He later said, "I won't say they're as old as me, but my balls are quite old."

OLD ORBS
Rumours' cover snapper Herbert Worthington III (died 2013) was Stevie Nicks' portraitist of choice: he also shot Nicks for her *Bella Donna* and *The Wild Heart* albums. He owned House Of Worthington, an antiques store in LA: his footstool and glass orb are used as props.

YESTERDAY'S VIGON
Designer Larry Vigon, who painted *Rumours*' lettering, also did the paintings for the cover of Eric Clapton's *Behind The Sun* LP, as well as designing covers for Chicago, Frank Sinatra, The Rembrandts and John Lee Hooker.

FLEETWOOD GAK
Fleetwood Mac planned to thank their cocaine dealer in the LP's sleeve credits: he died before they got the chance.

"Trauma. *Trau-ma.*" That's how Christine McVie described the making of Fleetwood Mac's 11th album to *Rolling Stone* just after its release, forewarning the world of the one thing that everyone now knows about *Rumours* – that it's an album born out of intense strife.

Numerous other rock records are like this, of course. You don't need to be a medic to see from the cover alone that Syd Barrett was 'a bit gone' for his post-Pink Floyd debut, *The Madcap Laughs*. Nor is a Relate counsellor needed to detect personal disconnect in Richard & Linda Thompson's *Shoot Out The Lights*. But these troubled albums had the benefit – even if that's the wrong word – of being relatively 'fringe' sellers. When the members of Fleetwood Mac literally forced themselves to make *Rumours* under a grim cloud of infighting and powder-snorting, they were already a No. 1 band. When they came out of the studio with *Rumours* under-arms, they were going to get even bigger. But not much had got better on a personal level.

But here's the thing… *Rumours* doesn't *sound* like a troubled record. Yes, there is disharmony – venom even – in its lyrical underbelly, but such things don't always translate to a sunny-afternoon cruise in a convertible with a car radio blaring. And for that recreation, *Rumours* is perfect. It's melodically masterful: equal parts dream-pop, concise rock and pristine folk, all produced beautifully. Much of it sounds positively joyous. Go figure.

When the band forced themselves to make Rumours under a grim cloud of infighting, they were already a No. 1 band

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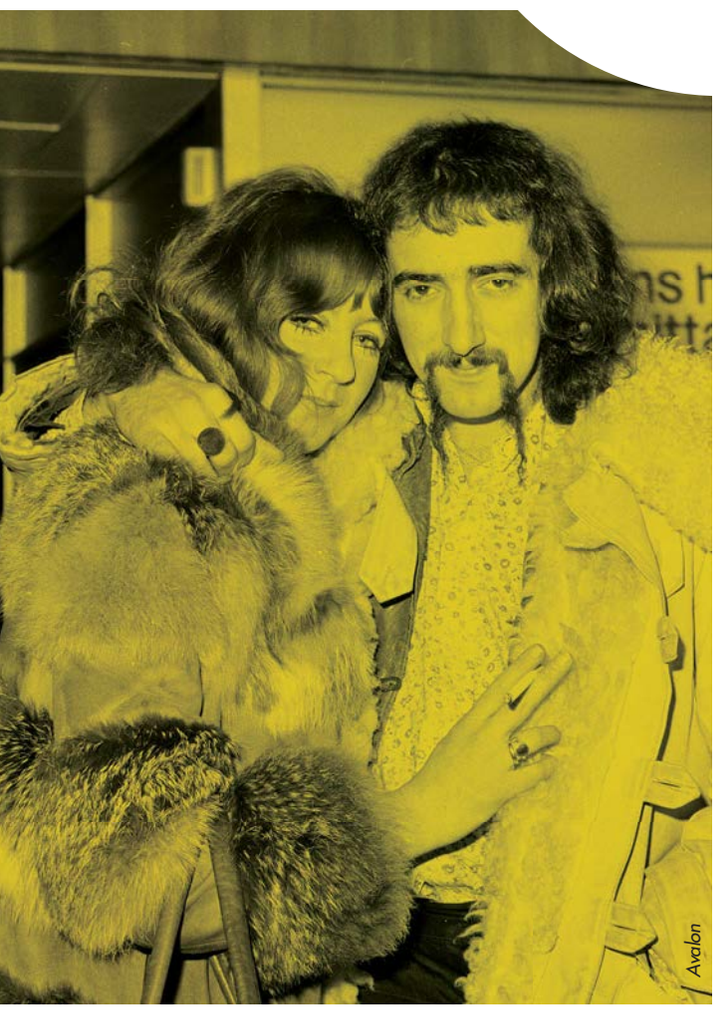
Alamy


Avalon

"We refused to let our feelings derail our commitment to the music, no matter how complicated or intertwined they became," Mick Fleetwood wrote in his 2014 autobiography *Play On: Now, Then And Fleetwood Mac*. "It was hard to do, but no matter what, we played through the hurt."

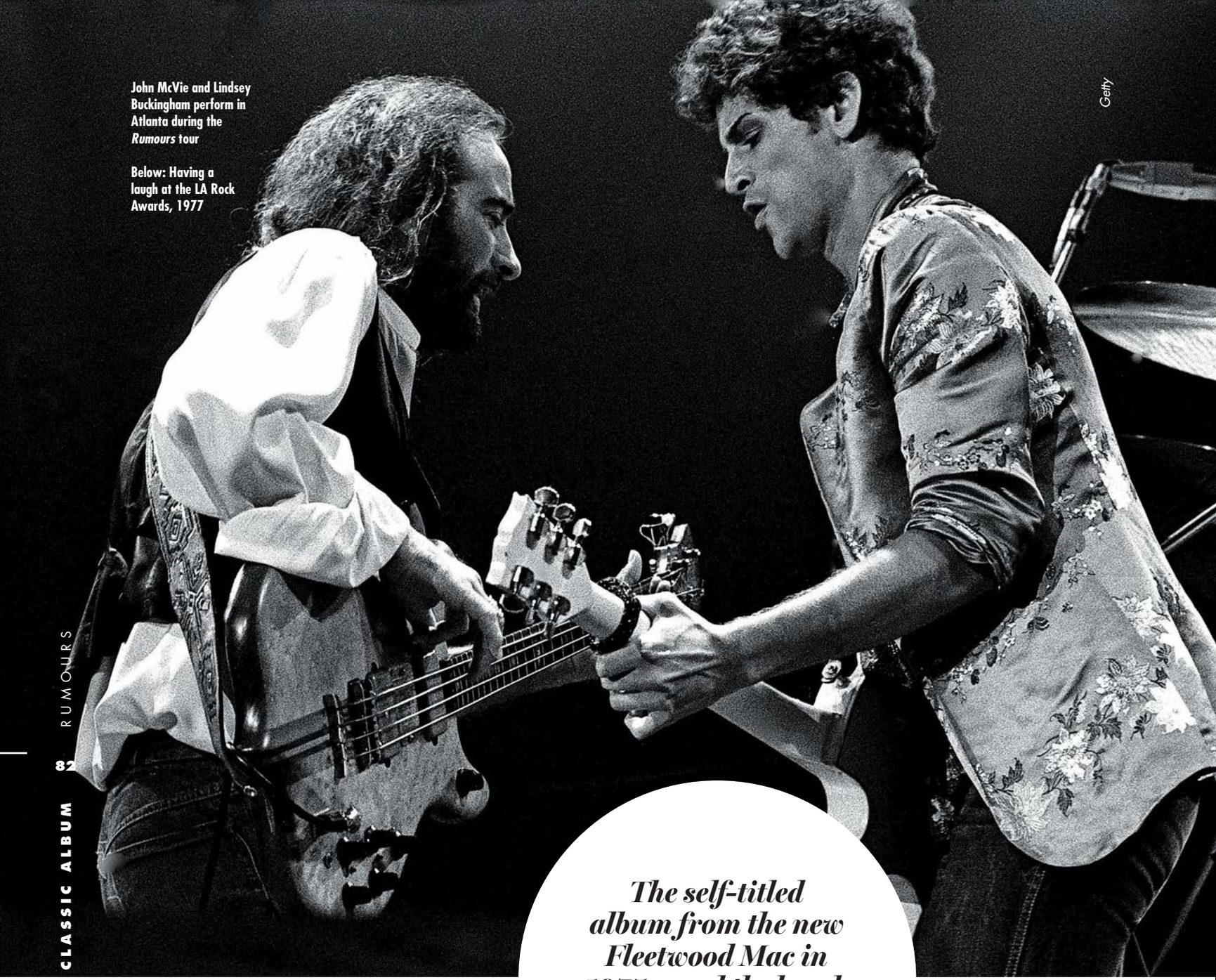
The reward for this stoicism, amid such a "classic intergalactic mess" (Fleetwood again), is an estimated 40 million albums sold.

Rumours was dreadfully uncool at the time, of course. It came out at the vanguard of punk: The Damned's *Damned Damned Damned*, the first full album by a UK punk band, was also released in February 1977. There were certainly few anarchy-chasing UK teens who'd countenance this California slickness by a bunch of ageing, drug-addled hippies. And rightly so, as *Rumours* is an adult record. Yet

Top: *L-R – John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, Stevie Nicks and Mick Fleetwood*

Above: *The bunker-like Record Plant Studio in Sausalito, where* Rumours *was recorded*

Left: *The McVies split up during the recording of the album*



John McVie and Lindsey Buckingham perform in Atlanta during the *Rumours* tour

Below: Having a laugh at the LA Rock Awards, 1977

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The self-titled album from the new Fleetwood Mac in 1975 saved the band. The album slowly grew to become No. 1 a year after release

Getty

it's certainly endured. Which makes its birth even more incredible…

A BAND REBORN

By the mid 1970s, Fleetwood Mac's star had waned since the glory days of Peter Green and their 'British blues' ascendancy. They'd relocated to LA, but when their latest guitarist/singer Bob Welch left what was the group's ninth line-up in eight years, it seemed a severe blow to their long-term prospects. Does anyone who isn't a hardcore fan recall 1973 Fleetwood Mac album *Mystery To Me*? Nevertheless, Mick Fleetwood was keen to keep going *somehow* and, when one day checking out Sound City Studios in LA, he first heard a song called *Frozen Love*, from 1973 album *Buckingham Nicks*. Coincidentally, Lindsey Buckingham was at Sound City that day, recording some demos, and the two met: Fleetwood soon asked Buckingham to join Fleetwood Mac and the

guitarist agreed – on the condition that his musical and romantic partner, Stevie Nicks, could also join. Fleetwood didn't have much to lose, as his band were selling just enough records, in his own words, "to pay Warner Bros' light bill". Christine McVie wanted to ensure sisterly harmony, though: before agreeing, she insisted on meeting Nicks to make sure they got on – though it wasn't exactly the two women's relationship that would utimately prove to be the problem in Fleetwood Mac.

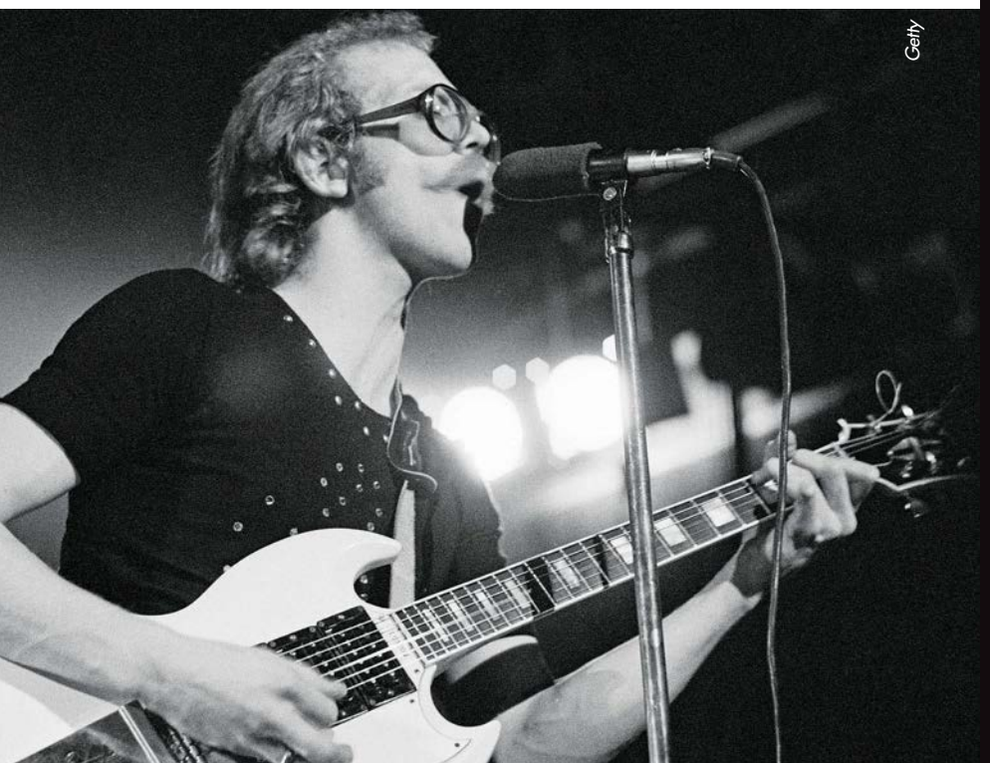
In a Buckingham Nicks interview with *Birmingham After Dark* in 1975, as they played their last show as a duo before committing to Fleetwood Mac, their thoughts are intriguing, and the two Americans talk about reconvening their own band before too long: "Hopefully, we can get our name known, instead of being buried within the name Fleetwood Mac. People will hear the difference in the music and take notice," said Buckingham. "We figure it will be a tremendous learning experience," added Nicks. "They can help us and we can help them, so it will be a give-and-take thing."

The self-titled album from the new Fleetwood Mac in 1975 saved the band. *Rhiannon* had gone to No. 11 in the US *Billboard* singles chart, and the album slowly grew to become a No. 1 a year after release. The Reprise/Warner Bros label wanted a reprise. And quick.

Yet, away from the music, the Fleetwood Mac "family" (their word) was hugely dysfunctional. Christine and John McVie had recently split after eight years of marriage and were not speaking. Nicks and Buckingham, despite their musical chemistry, were rapidly heading the same way. Mick Fleetwood was mainly talking to lawyers: he and his wife Jenny Boyd were in the midst of a divorce. "Everybody was pretty weirded out," Christine McVie later told *Rolling Stone*. "Somehow, Mick was there, the figurehead: 'We must carry on… let's be mature about this, sort it out'. Somehow we waded through it."

RECORDING *RUMOURS*, TOGETHER, APART

Fleetwood Mac booked into the Record Plant in Sausalito, near San Francisco, in February 1976 to record what would become *Rumours*. Although the Record Plant facilities in New York and Los Angeles were set up for expansive and



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Below: Bob Welch performing with Fleetwood Mac in 1973. He left before the recording of *Rumours*, prompting the recruitment of Buckingham and Nicks

The songs

Band credits

Lindsey Buckingham *Guitars, dobro, percussion, vocals*
Mick Fleetwood *Drums, percussion, harpsichord*
Christine McVie *Keyboards, vocals*
John McVie *Bass guitar*
Stevie Nicks *Vocals*

Main production credits

Fleetwood Mac *Production*
Ken Caillat and Richard Dashut *Production, engineering*
Chris Morris *Assistant engineering*

1 *SECOND HAND NEWS*

Buckingham

Buckingham *Lead vocals*

Early on, it was simply known as *Strummer* (although producer Ken Caillat has suggested Buckingham was at first just keeping the lyrics a secret from Nicks). Caillat also said John McVie originally had an "amazing, flowing and melodic bass part", but the pop-focused Buckingham insisted it was changed for a much simpler quarter-note pattern. He wanted a groove that echoed the Bee Gees' *Jive Talkin'*. "This was the start of [Buckingham] really calling the shots," Caillat recalled. "It became a 'my way or the highway' thing with him, which he perfected on the *Tusk* album." Part of the rhythm track is Buckingham banging out 'drums' on a faux-leather studio chair.

2 *DREAMS*

Nicks

Nicks *Lead vocals*

At Sausalito's Record Plant there was a converted office/studio room known as 'Sly Stone's Pit' – decorated with plush maroon carpet on the floors, walls and ceiling, a semi-circular black-velvet bed, and Victorian drapes – where Nicks would disappear to tinker on her electric piano. One day, she came back with the (essentially three-chord) song, *Dreams*.

Christine McVie later explained to *Q*: "The Lindsey genius came into play and he fashioned three sections out of identical chords, making each section sound completely different. He created the impression that there's a thread running through the whole thing." Buckingham's efforts seem somewhat incongruous, as *Dreams*' metaphor-laden words are aimed squarely at him.

Fans often point to the genius of Fleetwood's metronomic drum playing on *Dreams*, but its basic hypnotic effect was achieved by Caillat lifting eight bars of his playing and looping it. Fleetwood added overdubs after.

3 *NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN*

Buckingham

Buckingham *Lead vocals*

Buckingham and Caillat were so focused on achieving the brightest possible sound for his acoustic guitar at the dead-sounding Record Plant studios that they agreed to change strings *every 20 minutes* during specific takes. In the end, they even moved to LA's Sound City Studios to record this particular track.

Caillat admitted that: "I'm sure the roadies wanted to kill me," for having to re-string three times an hour, and they were probably more livid when he and Buckingham realised that the perfect guitar take of *Never Going Back Again* was in the wrong key. So, Buckingham re-recorded the two guitar parts and his vocals the next day – but without bothering to change his strings this time.

The songs *continued*

4 *DON'T STOP*
C McVie

Buckingham and C McVie *Lead vocals*

This was written by Christine for John, trying to assure him he'll feel better one day about her leaving him. Which, even if he *had* been an ass, didn't mean it was easy for him to play on. It started out with McVie alone singing, but that wasn't working – so Buckingham took over all but the second verse. It was more positive than much of the lyrical content of *Rumours*: "It might have, I guess, been directed more toward John, but I'm just definitely not a pessimist." It's now forever entwined/tainted with Bill (and Hillary) Clinton's political campaigning: Pres Bill persuaded the then-disbanded Mac to reform and perform it for his inaugural ball in 1993, and by the end, they were joined onstage by both Clintons, a host of White House aides and (why not?) Warren Beatty, Chuck Berry and Michael Jackson.

5 *GO YOUR OWN WAY*
Buckingham

Buckingham *Lead vocals*

Buckingham wanted a drum feel akin to Charlie Watts on The Rolling Stones' *Street Fighting Man*: "[The] rhythm was a tom-tom structure that Lindsey demoed by hitting Kleenex boxes or something," Fleetwood recalled. "I never quite got to grips with what he wanted, so the end result was my mutated interpretation…" (he later blamed his dyslexia). Nicks was particularly affronted by Buckingham's acerbic: *"Packing up/Shacking up is all you want to do."* Buckingham's outro guitar solo was comp'd together by Caillat at the last minute from "about six" takes at Criteria Studios in Miami. Buckingham nearly throttled Caillat when the producer/engineer deleted a take the guitarist said he liked… even though he had just *told* Caillat to delete it, because they were running out of tracks.

6 *SONGBIRD*
C McVie

C McVie *Lead vocals*

This was recorded at Berkeley's University Of California Zellerbach Auditorium, with Christine McVie playing a nine-foot Steinway grand (with a bouquet of roses on top) and 15 mics placed around the auditorium. In *Making Rumours: The Inside Story Of The Classic Fleetwood Mac Album*, Ken Caillat wrote: "When Christine arrived, we dimmed the house lights so that all she could see were the flowers and the piano with the spotlight shining down from the heavens. She nearly broke into tears. Then she started to play." Buckingham's acoustic guitar was also recorded live as he monitored McVie's performance, but recorded on separate mics away from the soundstage.

7 *THE CHAIN*
Buckingham, Fleetwood, C McVie, J McVie, Nicks

Buckingham *Lead vocals*
with C McVie and Nicks

Side 2's legendary opener is the only Fleetwood Mac song (by this line-up) co-credited to all five members. It started as a Christine McVie song called *Keep Me There*, was melded with a McVie bassline from an early jam as a bridge, was arranged largely by Buckingham and had words written by Nicks. It was pieced together from bits – hence 'the chain' – but the lyrics grew into something of a metaphor for the band members' co-dependence. Richard Dashut has claimed the only time on *Rumours* when instruments at the Record Plant were recorded live together is the drums, bass and lead guitar of *The Chain*'s outro – famous for years, of course, as the TV theme for Formula 1 Grand Prix motorsport.

8 *YOU MAKE LOVING FUN*
C McVie

C McVie *Lead vocals*

For once, Buckingham wasn't around directing everything from birth, and Christine played Hammond B3, clavinet and Fender Rhodes with Fleetwood adding wind chimes and castanets to his drums. McVie couldn't master the wah-pedal part on her clavinet simultaneously, so Fleetwood – on his hands and knees – played the pedal. Of Nicks and Buckingham's ethereal backing vocals, Caillat recalled: "Stevie and Lindsey were having an argument. Vicious name-calling, 'you motherfucker' this, 'you fucking bastard' that. Back and forth it went. The tape would start rolling and they'd sing… just beautiful, two little angels. The tape would stop and they'd be calling each other names again. They didn't miss a beat."

9 *I DON'T WANT TO KNOW*
Nicks

Nicks *Lead vocals*
with Buckingham

Nicks' lyrics were aimed at Buckingham, but on the recording, the duo aptly end up singing it at each other. The sonic detail in the recording of *Rumours* is evident in Buckingham's acoustic guitar's string squeaks. Buckingham had organised the rest of the band to record the backing track without Nicks' knowledge – it was meant as appeasement, as he planned to leave her *Silver Springs*, also about Buckingham, off the album… Nicks was initially incensed.

10 *OH DADDY*
C McVie

C McVie *Lead vocals*

Written by McVie for Mick Fleetwood (who the rest of the band called 'Big Daddy'), and another track dominated by Buckingham's delicate acoustic-guitar overdubbing. Known as 'Addy' for a month as a joke, after Caillat accidentally sliced McVie's vocal on the master tape. They fixed it, of course. Another overdub!

11 *GOLD DUST WOMAN*
Nicks

Nicks *Lead vocals*

Another song about a relationship gone horribly wrong: this time, Nicks' (and others') affair with cocaine. In 2003, she told *Uncut*: "Drug-taking was methodical when we got to LA. *Gold Dust Woman* was about how we all love the ritual of it, the little bottle, the diamond-studded spoons, the fabulous velvet bags. For me, it fitted right into the incense and candles and that stuff."

Nicks recorded her howling vocals at around 4am, after downing loads of Courvoisier cognac – before Fleetwood overdubbed his smashing of glass sheets, thrown from the top of a ladder while he was dressed in full protective overalls and goggles.

Sweet harmony: Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks

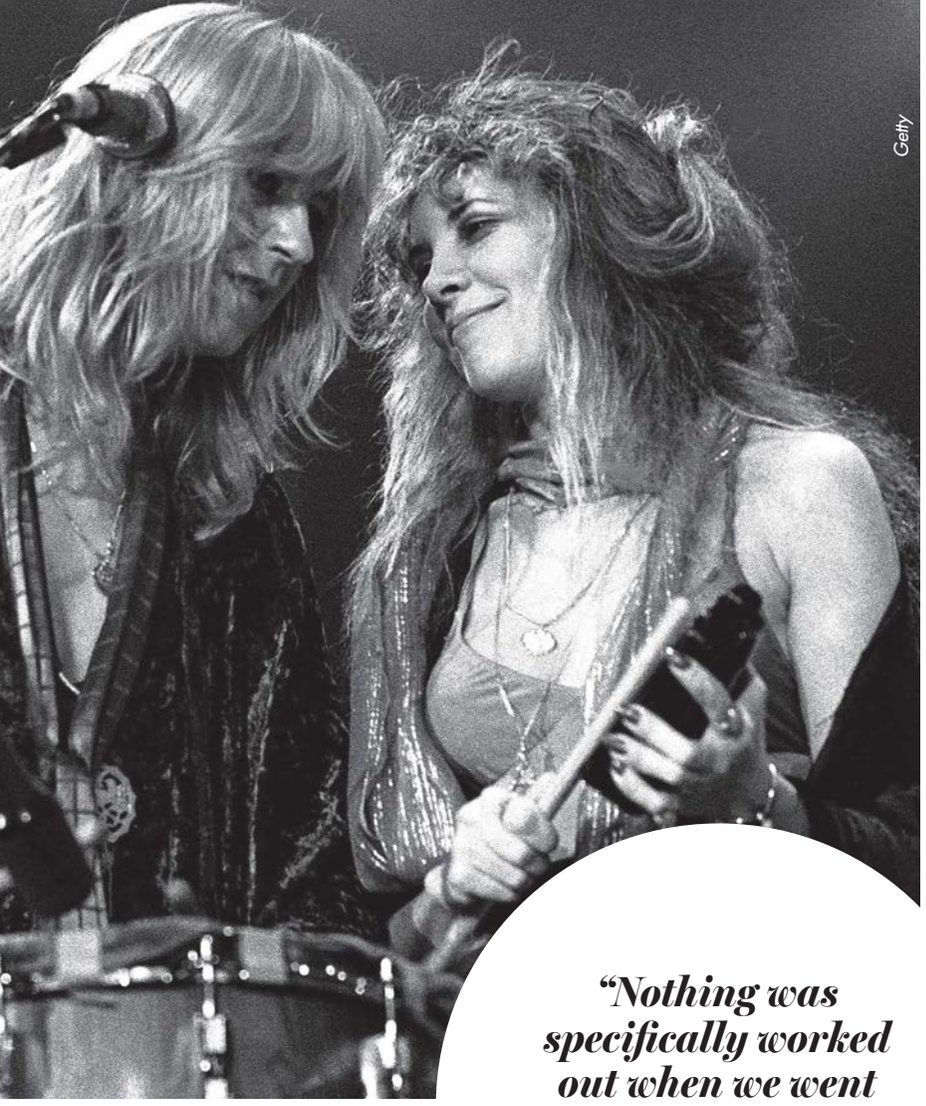
Below: Lindsey Buckingham onstage at the Berkeley Community Theater in 1977

Below, right: An animated Stevie Nicks

Rumours On Record

The remastered 2009 vinyl pressing of *Rumours* is still selling strong [Reprise B004OKFISQ]. It retains such hipster cachet, you can buy it in apparel store Urban Outfitters, and when *Long Live Vinyl* checked Amazon at press time, it was *still* No. 8 in the vinyl chart.

Aficionados should look out for 2011's two-LP Set, with the 11 original tracks split 3+3 and 3+2 over two 45rpm 180-gram vinyl platters. The reviewers at *Tone Audio Magazine* say the "pressing is flawless from beginning to end. This is definitely the super-sized version of *Rumours*. It goes beyond big sound. You can just feel this record breathe, in and out, while listening to tracks that you thought you knew like the back of your hand." You also get special matte/gloss packaging: 'Fleetwood Mac Rumours' in embossed lettering, the images of Fleetwood and Nicks in a glossy finish and the rest of the cover in a matte finish – all in a gatefold jacket, with lyric insert and the b/w band photos on the inside jacket. It costs around £45.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loud rock recording, the Sausalito operation was much smaller. The bunker-like room Fleetwood Mac used was just 30 feet by 20 feet and a very dry-sounding space – it's one of *Rumours*' distinguishing sonic footprints. Producers/engineers Ken Caillat and Richard Dashut recorded onto a 24-track tape with state-of-the-art mics, though it still took a while to get the clarity of sound they wanted, and squashing in the band themselves was something of an emotional challenge. It was a kooky place. After a demand from previous client Sly Stone, the Record Plant had managed to obtain industrial-grade nitrous oxide under the pretext that the gas was somehow critical to an album's recording process: it was actually so they could supply gas masks hanging from the studio's ceiling for Sly to get high on 'laughing gas'. But Fleetwood Mac weren't laughing much at all.

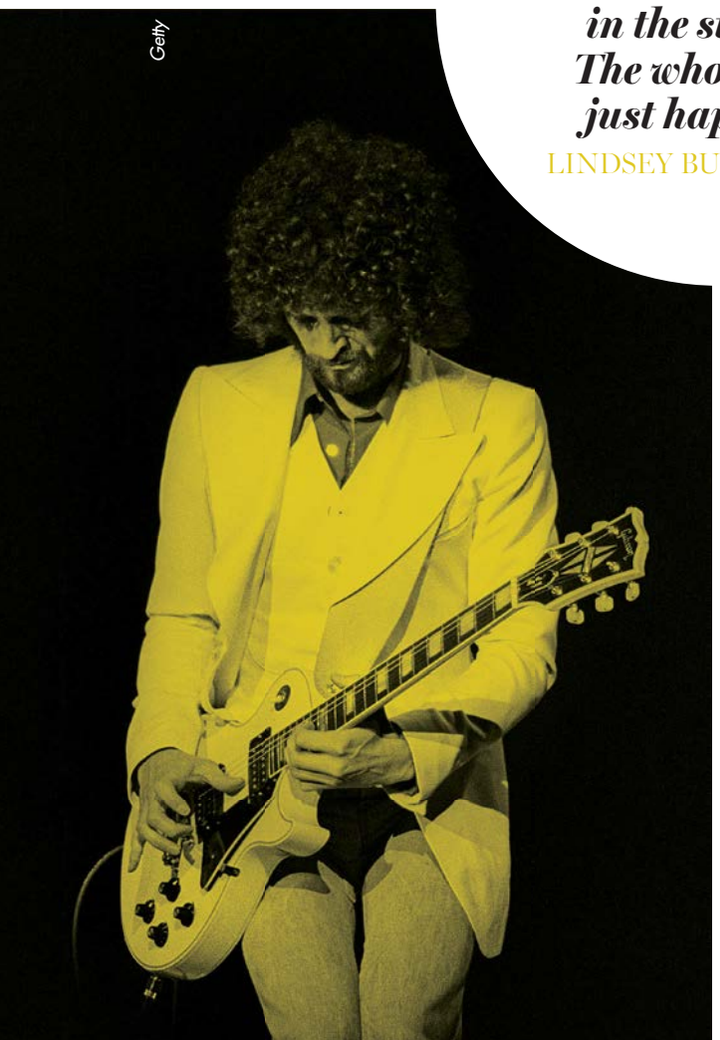
Caillat certainly had his work cut out, way beyond the basics of engineering and co-producing as a relative newcomer. Caillat told *Sound On Sound* magazine how Fleetwood's divorce papers were coming in as they recorded. "I remember Mick walking into the control room as white as a ghost, and of course, everyone rallied around him… but then there was John and Christine's break-up. She'd sneak her new boyfriend into the studio just as John was walking out through another door, and we were kinda ducking – 'When are the two chemicals going to mix? When are we going to have the explosion?'"

It wasn't as if these songs were the considered reflections on lives and loves long-gone, either. "There was nothing specifically worked out when we went in the studio," Buckingham told *Q*. "We didn't have demo takes. The whole thing just happened."

In the liner notes to the *Rumours* reissue in 2013, Nicks wrote: "Even though *Go Your Own Way* was a little angry, it was also honest. So then I wrote *Dreams*, and because I'm the chiffony chick who believes in fairies and angels, and Lindsey is a hardcore guy, it comes out differently. Lindsey is saying, go ahead and date other men and go live your crappy life, and [I'm] singing about the rain washing you clean. We were coming at it from opposite angles, but we were really saying the same exact thing.

"Nothing was specifically worked out when we went in the studio… The whole thing just happened"

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM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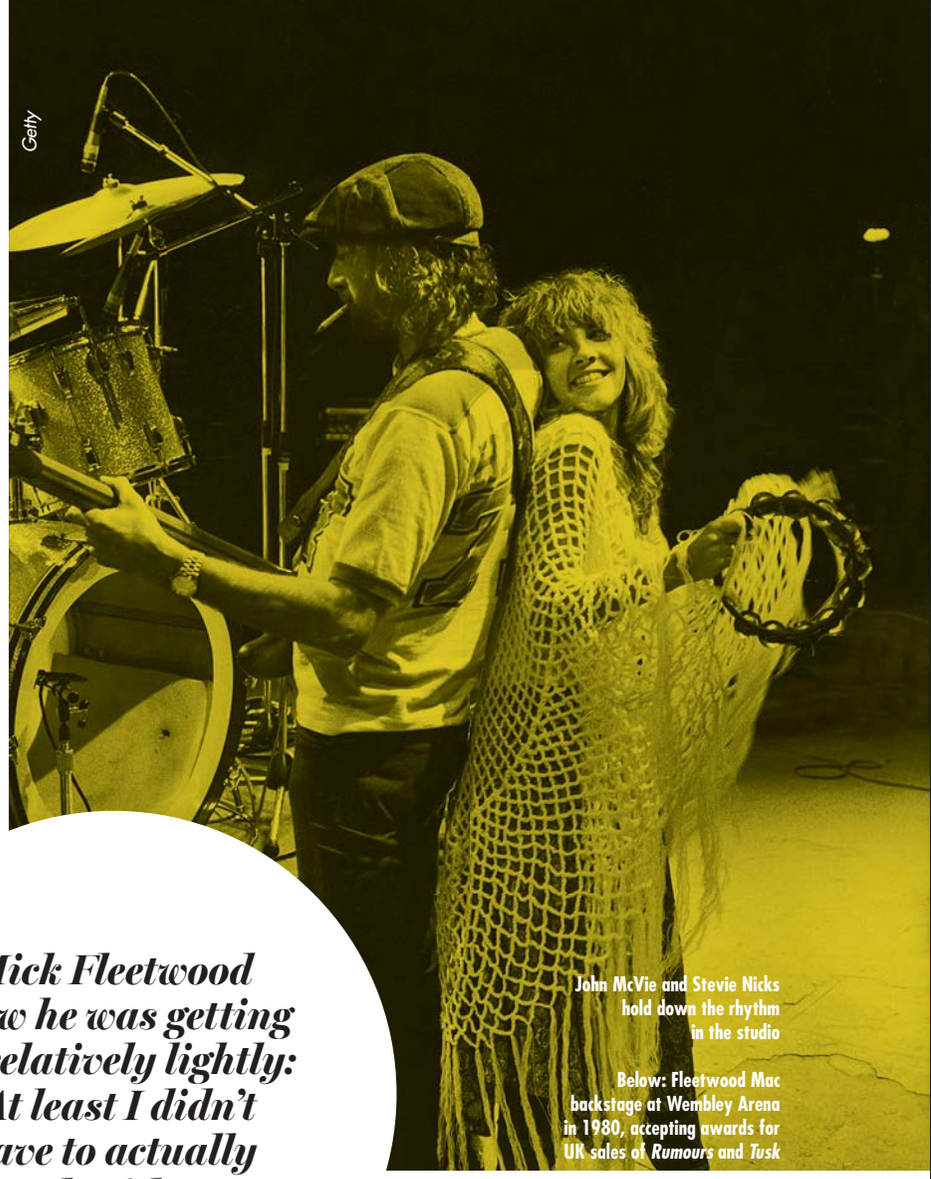
Avalon

"It was the fairy and the gnome," she also judged, on the contrast between her songs and Buckingham's. "I was trying to be all philosophical. And he was just mad."

Christine McVie's songs weren't as raw, but were mostly aimed at John McVie, who she had just left. He wasn't enjoying himself, either: "I'd listen to the words [of *Don't Stop*], which were mostly about me, and I'd get a lump in my throat. I'd turn around and the writer's sitting right there." It probably didn't help that she'd left him for the band's lighting director, Curry Grant, who John would see every time Fleetwood Mac toured; and that Christine's *You Make Loving Fun* was a silky salutation to how wonderful her new man was. Bummer.

Relationships were so fraught that, while 'the boys' lived in the hillside house that came with residency at the Record Plant, Nicks and Christine McVie stayed in separate apartments on the Sausalito seafront. But even some nights after they had left the studio, a stoned John McVie would come looking for Christine. "He'd be walking up and down the corridor, very upset, screaming her name, and she'd be hiding in my room," Nicks later recalled. Despite his own marriage troubles, Mick Fleetwood knew he was getting off relatively lightly: "At least I didn't have to actually *work* with my ex-spouse," he noted. Indeed, John McVie's turmoil lasted years. When the band reunited in 1997, 20 years later, he was still smarting, according to Christine: "One night, during the 1997 tour, we all got drunk together in the hotel bar after a gig and he decided to address the entire room on the subject: 'She's a lovely, lovely lady, my ex-wife, even though she told me to fuck off,'" she remembered John bellowing, before he struggled to his feet, fell and knocked over an entire table of drinks. "About the only people in the



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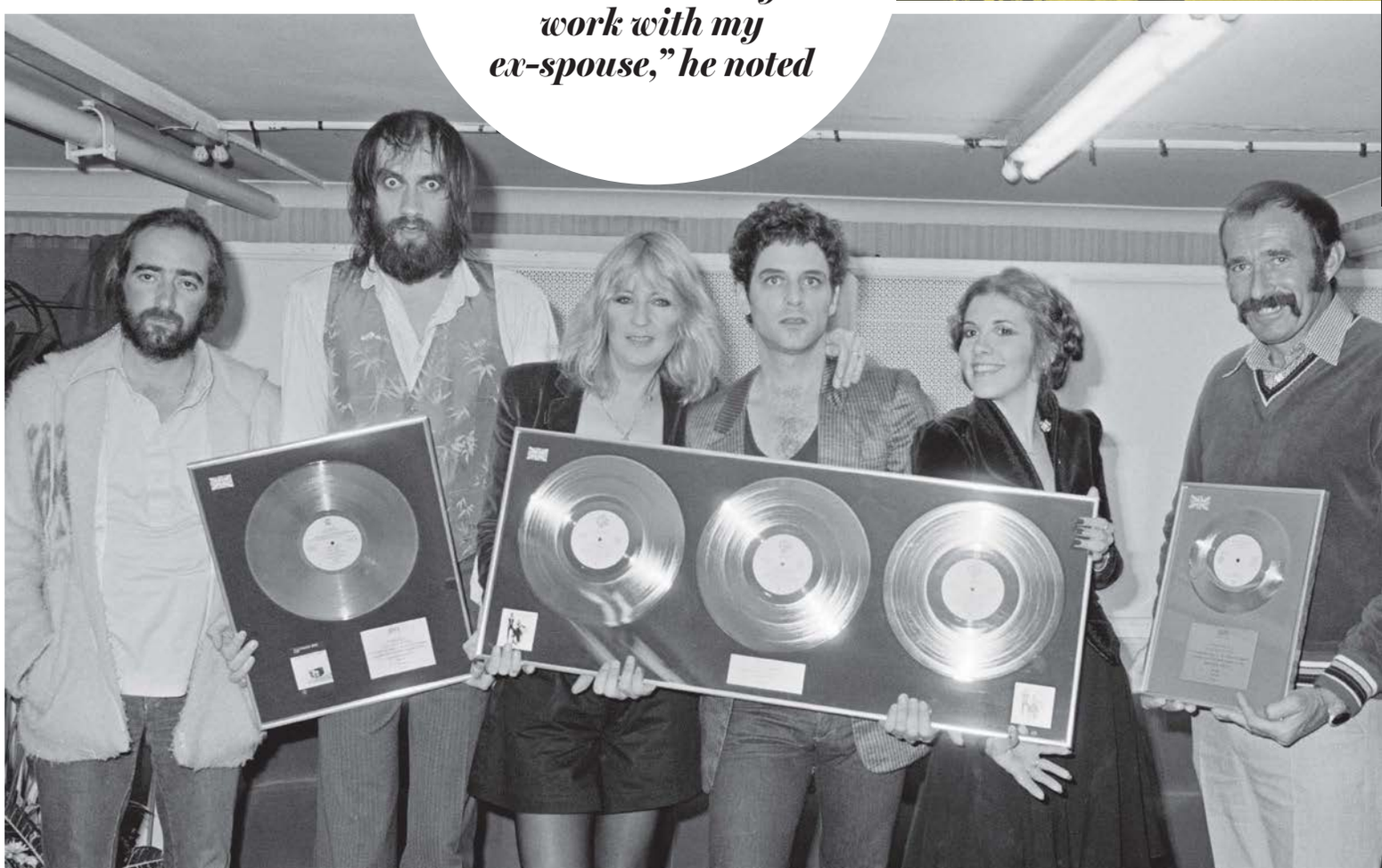
John McVie and Stevie Nicks hold down the rhythm in the studio

Below: Fleetwood Mac backstage at Wembley Arena in 1980, accepting awards for UK sales of *Rumours* and *Tusk*

Mick Fleetwood knew he was getting off relatively lightly: "At least I didn't have to actually work with my ex-spouse," he noted



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band who haven't had an affair are me and Lindsey," John McVie noted, wryly. (Note: just after *Rumours*, the clearly forgiving Christine McVie soon invited Sandra Elsdon to share her new LA house – she was John's secret on-off girlfriend, the ex-partner of Peter Green, and later married *Rumours*' sleeve artist Larry Vigon. Keep up!).

The soap opera continued when Mac relocated to LA for overdubs and mixing. The tape machine at Wally Heider Studios kept chewing the 3,000 hours of Sausalito masters – the machine was duly nicknamed 'Jaws' – and they nearly lost the whole album. Fortunately, Caillat – for the first time in his career – had ensured backup 24-tracks were made at the Record Plant, which they brought in. More overdubbing (primarily Buckingham's guitar layers) was completed in a small room in Hollywood Boulevard's porno district. By then, Nicks and Christine McVie mostly stayed away, unless needed. There were even more overdubs recorded at Sound City and the Record Plant in LA, and at Miami's Criteria Studios. When it became time for the band's press duties, the five members insisted on being interviewed separately – inbetween sloping in and out of rehab.

ONLY RUMOURS

Selling 800,000 copies a *week* at its height, *Rumours* became one of rock music's defining recordings. When *Rolling Stone* initially praised its "pantheistic celebration of love and nature", they only made the same error that everyone else did. It simply sounded fantastic – when records are crafted with this amount of skill, the underlying themes barely seem to matter. Or even get noticed. Gold pulled from the wreckage, a diamond from dust? Whatever else *Rumours* was, it was a fabulous pop-rock record. "Looking back, it's like listening to war stories," Mick Fleetwood once said. "But you have to remember there were people yelling in pain with their legs shot away. There's blood and guts and disagreements still to this day. But that's what makes it mean a shit." And as Buckingham knew all too well of *Rumours*' multifaceted appeal: "It brought out the voyeur a little bit in everybody." ●

Above: *Rumours*-era Fleetwood Mac circa 1976

KEITH DALGLEISH
The Vinylist
60S SOUNDS
THE VINYLIST - LATE-60S COLLECTION
Mark Alexander

Record collector Keith Dalgleish has a treasure trove of vinyl that spans the ages. But it's the latter part of one decade in particular that really lights his fire. **Mark Alexander** finds out more…

You can trace Keith Dalgleish's love of 1960s music back to his childhood, and beyond. "I have a theory that I heard that style of music in the womb," says the Scottish collector, sipping a beer. "It's a theory I have, because I wonder why it's captured my imagination so much."

Of his 700-strong record collection, the majority are early pressings or reissues from a time of change – the late 60s. It was the era when rock and pop came of age; when manufactured chart-topping tunes gave way to social consciousness, political statements and experimentation. Festivals and psychedelia were the watchwords, and Dalgleish's collection is full of the latter.

"It stems from my parents' love of music," he says. "It's very common, but it's significant. You associate music with good times and nice feelings. My mum loved Simon & Garfunkel and Nancy & Lee. It's a very significant album for me. It's that sort of 'LA songwriting' interpretation of folk rock. And my mum loved it. My first recollection of enjoying music is mum playing those records."

Dalgleish and his siblings grew up around music, with the stereo a focal point of family life. "It wasn't a status symbol, but my dad liked listening to music and decided to get himself a really nice stereo," he says. "He spent £500 in 1970 on it. He wasn't flash, but part of growing up was getting to use that stereo, although my dad was never precious about it. In fact, I blew one of the speakers once with too much volume and bass."

Soaking up musical influences from his family through a repaired Bang & Olufsen stereo, Dalgleish had an eclectic approach to music. He confirms the first record he bought, and still has, was Elvis Presley's *I Got Lucky*. "It is absolutely terrible, but I loved Elvis Presley. I cried when he died." ▶

From the vagaries of the charts and pass-me-down LPs, Dalgleish found a focus when he attended Glasgow University in 1988. "I had a period when I didn't have a defining musical style. When I went to university, my musical tastes were very sporadic; from Public Enemy to Whitesnake to James Brown. It was all over the place."

Then he was introduced to The Doors. "I'd never heard of them. Although I'd been brought up with loads of music, I was actually really naïve. I'd never looked into it or questioned it. That changed when I heard The Doors."

SPIRIT GUIDE

By contrast to his first purchase, the latest addition to Dalgleish's record collection is a carefully produced album of previously unreleased live recordings of 60s LA psych band Spirit, which joined the throng 10 days prior to our interview. It illustrates the musical journey Dalgleish concluded during his early 20s, which culminated in his passion for a very special era in popular music culture and a fascination with vinyl. "This one has just been released and it's called *Live At The Ashgrove, 1967 Volume 1*," he says. "It's a beautiful example of Spirit prior to their first album, playing in the summer of 1967. Their first album came out in early 1968. They were one of the cool bands coming through then. It's a nice example of how vinyl is still going on."

By the time Dalgleish completed his first year at university, his musical horizons had been suitably broadened, which led to an obsessive fixation with The Doors and the late 60s in general. "I went through a stage of being quite particular about that era. People made fun of me about it. It was 1965 to 1968, and I adopted a fairly anal approach to my records back then."

A devotee of record fairs and a regular at Glasgow's most discerning record shops, Dalgleish set about amassing his collection, which has now spread across his living room and kitchen. It occurs to us that the physical age of late-60s records must present its own problems for the collector…

"For me, it's about quality rather than endless quantity," he says. "I can't be doing with records you can't listen to because they're in such bad nick. Condition is important. If you can't listen to it and enjoy it because the condition isn't great, then why have it?"

Without a shadow of a doubt, Dalgleish – who works for Scottish Natural Heritage – enjoys his music. It is part of his infectious charisma, evident as soon as the needle hits the first record. But why the late 60s?

"I tend to like first or early albums," he says. "But this is about an era. It's about a sound, ultimately. It's about a particular tone and a particular sound that I love."

KEITH'S SUPER EIGHT

Choice cuts from Dalgleish's collection

COUNTRY JOE & THE FISH

ELECTRIC MUSIC FOR THE MIND AND BODY
1967

"Possibly the definitive Berkeley band. They are from the political, lefty side of San Francisco. What attracted me to this album was the cover. If you're into 60s music, you couldn't make it up! This is the thing about LPs; it is a beautiful part of that era, it's got it all going on. It captures the imagination. I bought this totally unknown, which I loved doing. I fell in love with the sound. I have three copies of it. The first one I got was an 80s reissue on Vanguard. Then I got another copy, but the condition wasn't as good, and then I bought an early pressing. It's still one of my favourite albums."

TRAFFIC

MR FANTASY 1967

"This is Steve Winwood's band. He was an absolute child prodigy; playing the organ and sounding like Ray Charles. He'd left the Spencer Davis Group, sick with all the pop stardom, turned into a bit of a hippy… and recorded this album. I'm always interested in joining the dots, so I went looking for his stuff. It's one of the definitive early English psych albums, and the quality's there. But it's also got the silliness of English psych. And it's got folk in it. I love the way they've chucked everything in there. It comes across as fun and joyous music. It's original, mono, and a Pink Island label – that's what matters. The Pink Island label was only produced for a certain period."

CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

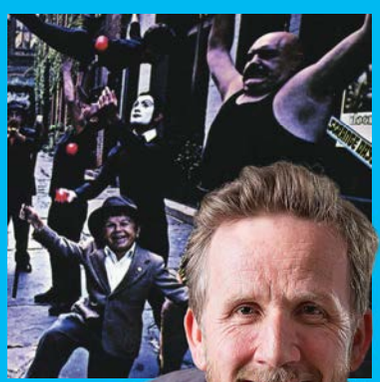
CROSBY, STILLS & NASH 1969

"It's one of the best-known albums out of the eight I've chosen. Crosby, Stills & Nash was an early supergroup. You have Dave Crosby from The Byrds, Stephen Stills from Buffalo Springfield and Graham Nash from The Hollies. There are loads of lovely stories about how they got together at Mama Cass' home. If you want country rock, this is it. The blend of the voices and harmonies is one of the most incredible sounds and it captures that fractured end to the 60s, when the euphoria was coming to an end. It's an early pressing and you can tell by the mottled finish – that's a good indicator."

THE DOORS

STRANGE DAYS 1967

"I have two copies of it; one I got while on holiday in Florida in 1991. I found a flea market where an old hippy woman was selling off her LPs and I bought all her Doors albums for $2 each! They weren't in amazing nick, but a couple were okay. I bought them because they had been bought by her in 1967. The Doors is where I got into this… for me, *Strange Days* captures that early Doors sound so beautifully. It's my first love. *Love Me Two Times;* it's the definitive 60s LA pop sound. *My Eyes Have Seen You;* it's only 2:22. That's why I love this era; they pack so much in. There's not too much flannel; that comes later, in '69, when it becomes big, progressive and overblown."



THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

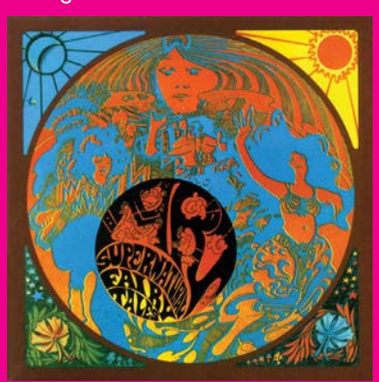
ARE YOU EXPERIENCED 1967

"This is a beautiful reissue from the late 80s – really nicely pressed. It was one of the first albums I bought after hearing Hendrix and The Doors for the first time. It's the raw sound the album has: some of that is down to technology and recording techniques, some of it's down to desire and lack of ability to do anything else. It captures a time when all those things collided, to create a certain sound. They didn't have loads of tracks to record the instruments onto. So they inadvertently created a sound that people have tried to replicate and have never been able to do."

ART

SUPERNATURAL FAIRY TALES 1967

"This is an interesting one. This is a reissue on Island, but they've absolutely mimicked the original pressing of it, even down to the fact it has a Pink Island record label. And it's in mono. It was only ever available in mono. That cover is done by Hapshash And The Coloured Coat, well-known graphic artists in the 60s – it's a definitive cover. The band is in a state of transformation, going from that R&B, mod sound into the new psych sound. Lots of bands tried to make that move, because that was selling. But inevitably what had gone before was transmogrified into something new – which is great art. You take your influences and reinterpret them through a new lens."



CARAVAN

IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU 1970

"I bought it at an Edinburgh record fair, an early American pressing on Decca. In Britain, they were on Deram, which was an English progressive label; in America, it was Decca, but it was called London Records. Caravan were at that crossover where psych becomes prog – that phase of shifting into another era, but taking what you had before and using it to influence what you're about to become. They were from the south of England and part of the Canterbury Sound. A very English, folk-influenced sound, but moving into the progressive side of psych. It's when I started to discover that early prog sound."

GRATEFUL DEAD

ANTHEM OF THE SUN
1968

"One of the first LPs I ever bought. I subsequently bought a boxset of reissues of the first five albums. These are really high-quality, 180-gram vinyl reissues that replicate the originals. It's the second Grateful Dead album, so again, very transitional. This album is literally spliced together from late-67 through to early-68 live recordings, overlapped with studio recordings in sync to create this big sound. The cover has the details about where the recordings come from. They mixed it for hallucinations… It's an unusual sound, not to everyone's taste – because it can be quite muddy at times – but it captures what it must've been like to hear them in those auditoriums." ●

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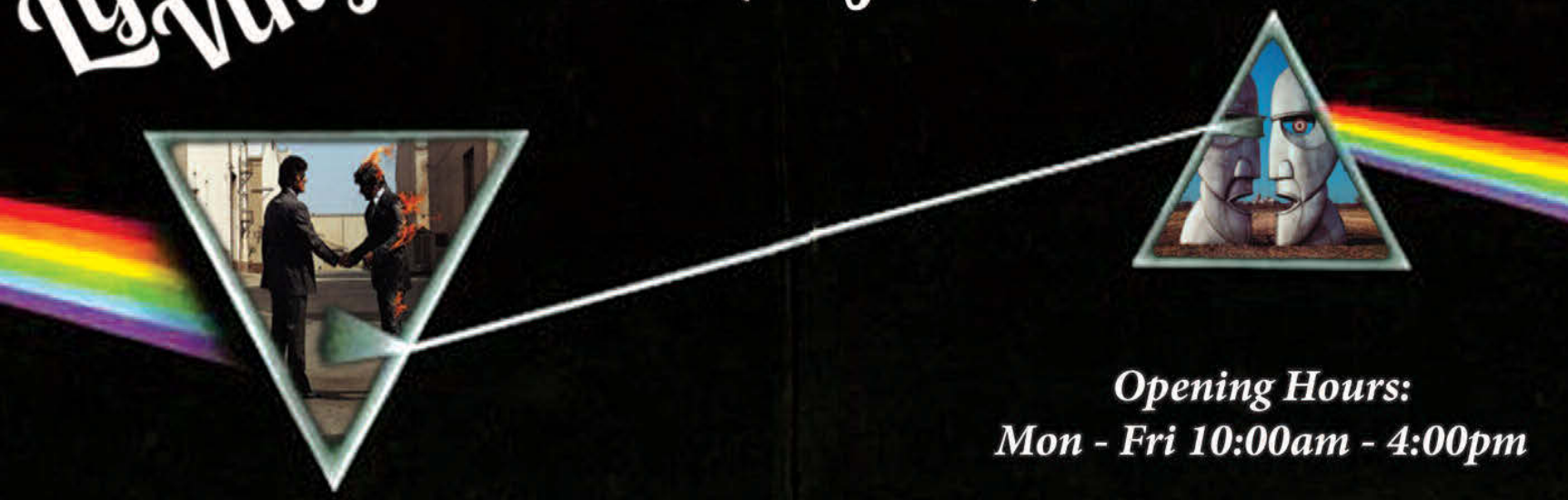

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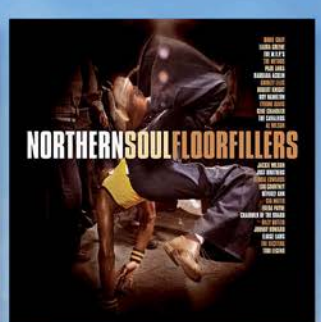

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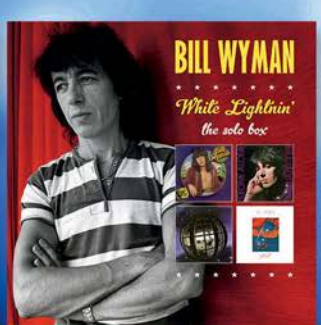

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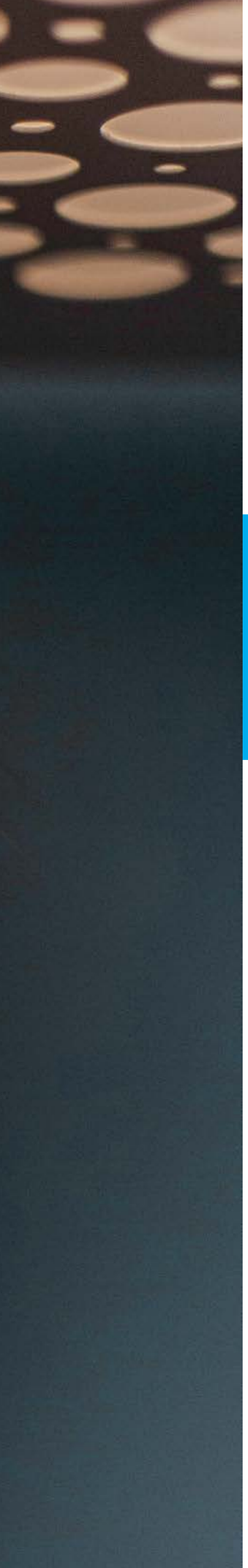


THURSTON MOORE

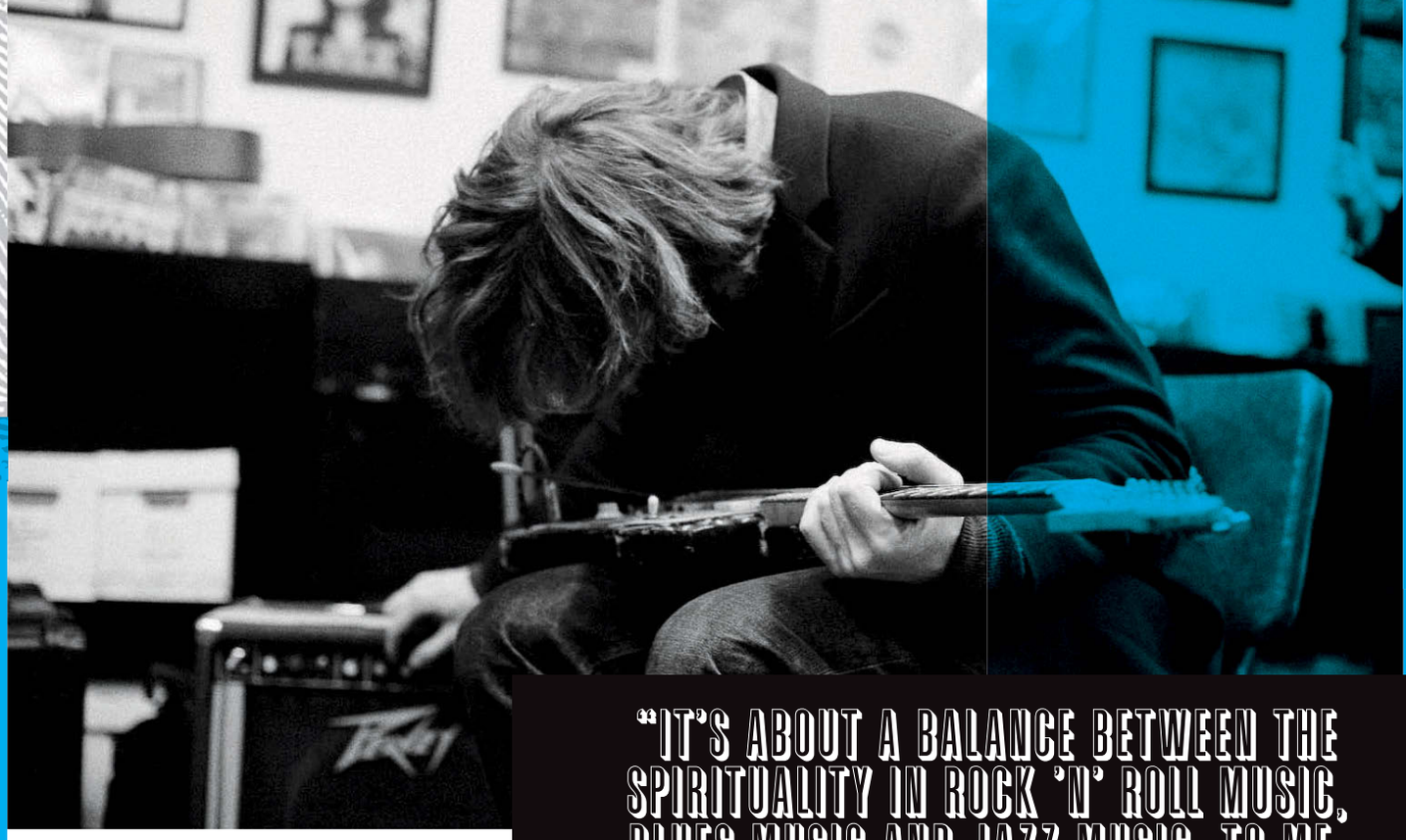
SONIC FINGERPRINTS

Thurston Moore's latest solo album, *Rock N Roll Consciousness*, is a work fuelled by the meditative effects that record collecting has had on the celebrated former Sonic Youth man and Jazzmaster-wielding noisenik's psyche. **Chris Parkin** meets a pioneering artist who takes inspiration from the most eclectic of sources…

There are plenty of songs that obsess over records. Pet Shop Boys' *The Pop Kids,* The Carpenters' *Yesterday Once More*, Adam Ant's *B-Side Baby*… it's a long list. There are also a bewildering number of albums inspired by the practice of meditation – Alice Coltrane's sprawling back catalogue, for a start. But albums inspired by the meditative effect of record collecting? Not so much. Thurston Moore's latest (fifth) album under his own name, *Rock N Roll Consciousness*, might just be the first.

The former Sonic Youth man still collects obsessively, hunting down records of a free-jazz persuasion and rare anthologies and journals of underground post-war poetry. This long-term habit, which started when Moore was still a pup and took off during punk, continues to inform most of what he does – from the sounds he conjures up to the Ecstatic Peace publishing imprint he runs. Moore was even invited to run poetry workshops at Naropa University's Jack Kerouac School Of Disembodied Poetics – the name of an *actual* literary arts program; look it up on Google if you don't believe us – after they heard about his collection.

The school was set up in 1974 in Boulder, Colorado by Buddhist guru Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He's no longer with us, but Moore remains fascinated with him. Trungpa taught meditation to David Bowie and Alan Ginsberg ("*Anyone* who was Alan Ginsberg's teacher is going to be pretty insane," laughs Moore) and employed John Cage and William Burroughs as lecturers. Moore also enjoys Naropa's



"IT'S ABOUT A BALANCE BETWEEN THE SPIRITUALITY IN ROCK 'N' ROLL MUSIC, BLUES MUSIC AND JAZZ MUSIC. TO ME, THAT'S WHY THAT MUSIC IS SO GALVANISING – SOCIALLY, ANYWAY"

spirit of humanitarian kindness. But he finds meditation – of which there is a lot at Naropa – just isn't for him. Which got him thinking: "Where do I find *my* sense of connection between the physical and metaphysical, my sense of enlightenment, my sense of peace?"

Moore's answer explains why record collectors are happy to spend so much time flicking through dusty boxes – and it also inspired the title of his new album. "It has to do with being among the documents, the second-hand records and books, that I have this vibrational, physical, tactile connection with," he explains. "They have a history of other people's imprints on them. I find that going to record stores and sifting through the bins – beyond the hunt and the consumerism of it, just sort of being there – is something I find meditational. I can spend inordinate amounts of time in these places. That's where *Rock N Roll Consciousness* came from, as a title, at least."

Moore, who's still eternally boyish and full of articulate enthusiasm at 58, says that surrounding himself with literature and music did, at some unspecific point in his life, "become very cosmic; just the beauty and depth and profundity of what is happening in it". He might not be singing paeans to his favourite Don Cherry and Glenn Branca albums on *Rock N Roll Consciousness*, but its five tracks are certainly a meditative listening experience, which taps into the ideas and energy contained in Moore's vast collection.

Citing the influence of the drawn-out compositions performed by Germany's avant-industrial collective Einstürzende Neubauten and Michael Gira's mighty noise rockers Swans, Moore lets his trademark mix of chiming space rock and alt-rock noise – a sound he's synonymous with after 30 years in Sonic Youth and four previous solo albums – play out hypnotically throughout the grooves of *Rock N Roll Consciousness*.

"It's about a balance between the spirituality in rock 'n' roll music, blues music and jazz music," says Moore. "To me, that's why that music is so galvanising – socially, anyway. I hear it in Michael Gira's Swans, where he likes to lose himself and play simple blues refrains among this chaotic discord that comes in and out while he's singing. I understand where he's coming from. He's channelling this feeling of being uplifted by music

Left to right: bassist Deb Googe, drummer Steve Shelley, Thurston and guitarist James Sedwards

IN LONDON'S FLASHBACK RECORDS SHOP IN 2014, MOORE LET HIS MUSIC TAKE OVER, AS HE DID WITH SONIC YOUTH, AND ATTACKED THE RACKS OF RECORDS WITH HIS GUITAR

that seems to come up from the earth. I've always felt that's what I want to do. It's the intrigue, the mystery of the unknown; that feeling of transcendence."

Despite Moore's allusions to musical shamanism and avant-garde noise, *Rock N Roll Consciousness* is remarkably accessible. It's warmly empathetic and recognisably a Thurston Moore album. But Moore's experiments in allowing his songs to evolve and unfurl without definition are bolder than on his previous solo release, 2014's *The Best Day*. There's also a real sense of intimacy, thanks to some captivating lyrics about feminist mysticism from pseudonym-employing poet Radieux Radio and the surging, tight-knit sound of a group that Moore calls a "nice second act" after Sonic Youth. This band, cobbled together shortly after Moore moved to London in 2013 and featuring gifted guitarist James Sedwards, My Bloody Valentine bassist Debbie Googe and old Sonic Youth comrade and drummer Steve Shelley, will be around for a while yet.

"I think there was a sense that *The Best Day* was just another transitional moment for me. Like, 'maybe he'll come out next time juggling amplified chainsaws. What's he going to do next?' I can see how it could have looked like a dalliance, but I didn't want it to be seen as that, because I knew right away that this is a strong entity."

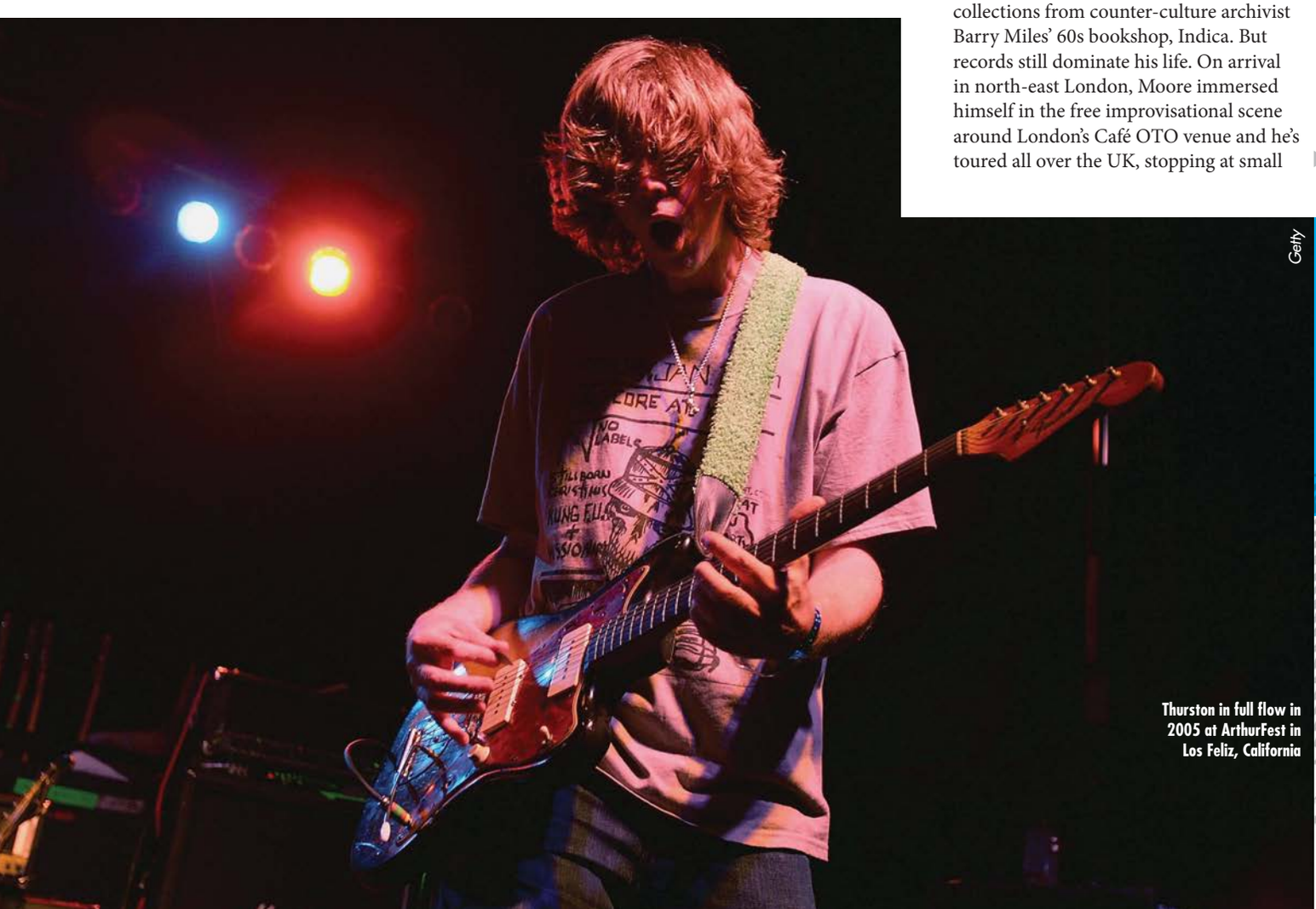
Anyone who saw one of Moore and Sedwards' earliest shows together, in the basement of London's Flashback Records shop in 2014, will know what he's talking about. Probably to the horror of record buyers in the shop at the time, Moore let his music take over – as he did so often with Sonic Youth – and attacked the racks of records with his guitar, while Sedwards built a spacey cacophony behind him.

This act of record-shop vandalism doesn't mark a change in his love of vinyl, though. Now that Moore is the master of his own destiny, with his own name on the front of the album and on gig posters, it means he can do even more record shopping.

"The other day, I was rehearsing for The Can Project," says Moore, about the band he put together for a recent tribute to the Krautrock legends at London's Barbican. "I was asked to put together and direct this octet, with Steve Shelley on drums. I took it very seriously and for three days, we rehearsed diligently. At the end of the second day, Steve looked up and was like: 'I've never seen Thurston want to rehearse before, he usually wants to fuck off to the record store'. 'But Steve, I'm trying to take my job seriously!' In Sonic Youth, I was always like, 'rehearsal, shmersel – let's go to the record store.'"

FREE-JAZZ MASTER

Now Moore's free to indulge his habit as and when. Since moving to Stoke Newington in 2013, he has been unearthing treasure troves of underground post-war poetry. Artist-run journals, "mimeo staple-stabbed publications from the 60s and 70s" and collections from counter-culture archivist Barry Miles' 60s bookshop, Indica. But records still dominate his life. On arrival in north-east London, Moore immersed himself in the free improvisational scene around London's Café OTO venue and he's toured all over the UK, stopping at small



Getty

Thurston in full flow in 2005 at ArthurFest in Los Feliz, California

venues and even smaller record shops. So what are Moore's tips for seeking out his favoured free-jazz and avant-garde records?

"Just hit the wall," he laughs. "I told [Swedish free-jazz saxophonist and collaborator] Mats Gustafsson that. He's an unbridled free-jazz collector. We would go into stores when we first did this Japanese tour together years ago and he was so ravenous, he would immediately start ploughing through the bins.

"But I had this thing where, before going to the bins, I would scan the walls. That's usually where the proprietor puts the 'heavy' items. I would be pulling them off the wall and Mats would see what I had and start crying. You *have* to hit the walls."

And if that fails? "A lot of records I like are actually *underneath* the bins. I'm really into looking in spoken-word boxes and I have this thing about collecting contemporary poetry records. But they're generally under the bins. Real backbreakers."

"I HAD THIS THING WHERE, BEFORE GOING TO THE BINS, I WOULD SCAN THE WALLS. THAT'S USUALLY WHERE THE PROPRIETOR PUTS THE 'HEAVY' ITEMS"

In his meditative record-shopping daze, Moore can cope with the discomfort. And anyway, there's magic to be harnessed. Moore's theory about records containing energy, ideas and historical imprints recalls Alfred Watkins' original idea of ley lines. Like the important historical meaning in Neolithic structures and the avenues and roads that link them together, lines – and stories – can be theoretically drawn between records and books. It's the reason why so many musicians and artists surround themselves with inspiring artefacts. Elton John has his collection of photography (and hip-hop) and, as Moore points out, David Bowie had a giant haul of books.

"He said one of the saddest things in his life was that he wouldn't be able to process every book in his library," recalls Moore. "So after he died, I was like, 'Where's his library?' That's the book *I* want to see: a bibliography of David Bowie's library. Man, I'd be really curious. Supposedly, he kept it in a separate location, which makes it even more enchanting. Like, where is that? Where did he go to be around his books?"

Slightly envious of Bowie, Moore says his own collection would be *much* bigger if he could afford it. Compelled to collect and archive from a young age – not yet understanding the Zen-like purpose of his actions – buying records and books has affected Moore's life in many ways.

"People always used to ask me, 'How come you weren't a typical New York loft-dwelling junkie?'. Well, I *was* New York and I *was* loft-dwelling, but I wasn't a junkie, because why spend money on dope when you can spend it on records?"

And we have to agree. Just say no… Records are much better for you. ●

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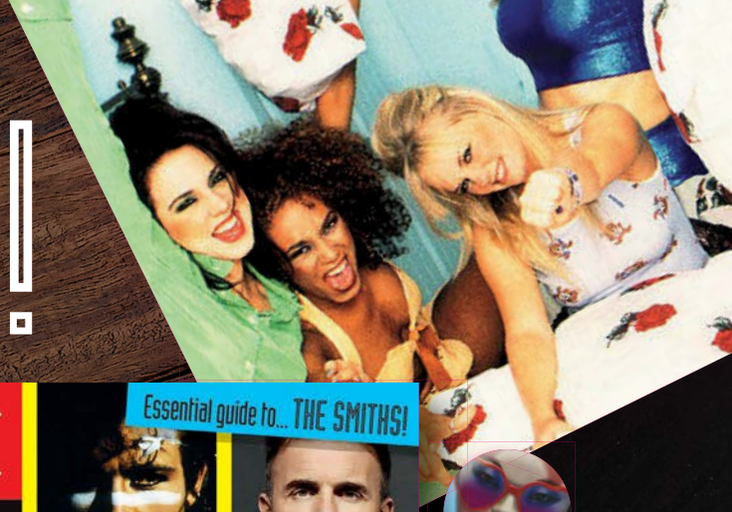

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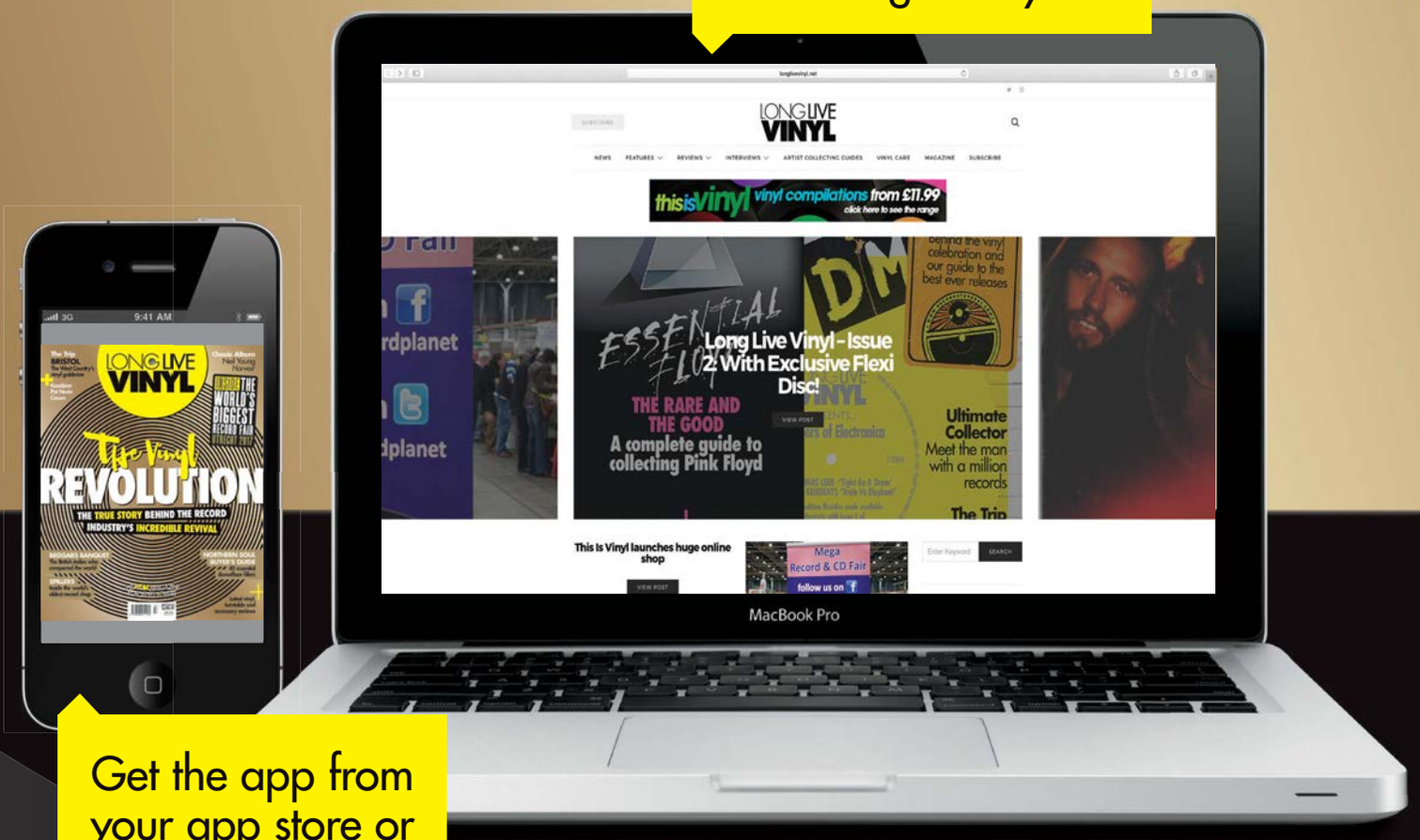

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Choice Cuts #2

THE MISFITS *HORROR BUSINESS*

PLAN 9 7"

This three-track 7" has a troubled production history, which led to its appearance in various permutations – as a result, it has become a seriously rare and desirable find for punk aficionados…

WAX FACTS
Misfits
Horror Business
Year **1979**
Format **7"**
£595

Recorded in January 1979 at CI Recordings in New York, this release was intended to be a five-track EP: the band couldn't afford to release a 12", so it was trimmed to three tracks for a 7" release. As well as the title track, the release includes *Teenagers From Mars* and *Children In Heat*. While a 12" acetate was produced for the EP, the remaining two tracks, *Who Killed Marilyn?* and *Where Eagles Dare*, would not see an official release until the 1985 compilation, *Legacy Of Brutality*. Only 2,000 copies of the 7" were pressed on yellow vinyl – the pressing ran into problems when, in June 1979, vocalist Glenn Danzig was told by a pressing plant in New Jersey that it didn't meet their minimum-order number for coloured vinyl. While this and other delays were happening, 2,000 sleeves were printed for the release. The sleeves also faced issues due to the colouring of the black ink on the photo on the back. These are all said to have been destroyed, then reprinted with the iconic sleeve used on the release. Some copies were issued with a Fiend Club merch insert and an extra black and white insert telling a horror story explaining the eerie noises on the recording.

Horror Business finally saw release in August of 1979 and is the band's third official single. This is a true piece of Misfits history, deserving pride of place in the home of any punk collector. ***Glen Bushell***

The Beatles

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND (ANNIVERSARY SUPER DELUXE EDITION)

UNIVERSAL

Beatles fans will, of course, endlessly debate which is the band's best album. However, the accolade for the most important surely rests with *Sgt. Pepper….* As arguably the most influential long-player of all time, its reputation as rock's first concept album has always been a misnomer – the 'fake band' conceit unravels after its second song and only makes a cursory reappearance on the penultimate track. So much for joined-up thinking.

Like *Revolver* from 1966, the diversity of musical styles and tone – from Lennon's acerbic bitterness and psychedelic imagination to McCartney's whimsy and Harrison's mysticism – is really what should lie at the heart of *Pepper…*'s long-term appeal. It's also George Martin's finest achievement as a producer.

So, what's the headline news from this new reissue? Well, Ringo's drums have never sounded bolder and the haul of unreleased gems is the most revealing since *Anthology 2*. From the album's opening moments presenting an orchestra tuning up, The Beatles tap into an interesting dualism. They're at once embracing the older order and thumbing their noses at the establishment. The *Sgt. Pepper…* theme itself is the album's rockiest moment. And this new version comes with added thump: Ringo's kit sounds cavernous, and the overdriven guitars are seriously punchy.

SHINING STARR

Ringo's appearance as Billy Shears on *With A Little Help From My Friends* finds him at the edge of his limited vocal range, for an anthem of collective unity that's a neat summation of the hopes of the emerging counter-culture community itself. It's a striking showcase for McCartney's supremely agile bass playing and, once again, Ringo's drums are noticeably amped up in this new mix, giving the song considerably more punch.

Lennon's first major contribution, *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds,* has become a psychedelic treasure, of course. Yet its pleasing counterpoint of laidback verses and stomping chorus is often missed, among the plaudits for its groundbreaking use of surrealism. You'll notice Ringo far more once again here, as his bass drums boom before each chorus. Producers Giles Martin and Sam Okell have also pimped the guitars on *Getting Better*, giving the intro a fresh, metallic sound. A perfect blend of Macca and Lennon's yin and yang.

For those who baulk at McCartney's whimsical side, which asserts itself on a handful of tracks at *Pepper*'s core, then this mix will alleviate some of those grumbles. If there's an

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

adjective that comes most to mind throughout here, it's 'muscular'. This new stereo mix thickens *Fixing A Hole* with far more bottom end than we're used to. There's sophistication, too, though. The Mike Leander string arrangement for *She's Leaving Home* sounds absolutely pristine. This classic 60s kitchen-sink drama finds The Beatles expertly straddling the generation gap of disaffected youth and disappointed parenthood. Sheila Bromberg's harp intro is wonderfully nuanced and Leander's occasional use of Indian motifs within a Western string arrangement is absolutely inspired.

FAIR PLAY

Those attracted by *Pepper*'s studio innovations will no doubt gravitate to the swirling cut-and-paste psychedelia of *Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!*, and the hallucinatory nature of George Martin's and Geoff Emerick's fairground interludes has never been more apparent.

Side 2 opens with George's only songwriting contribution to *Pepper*, the mid-tempo raga of *Within You Without You*. Along with *Love You To* and *The Inner Light*, it continues his fascination with Indian classical music and underlines the forward-thinking nature of this LP at its best. For *When I'm Sixty-Four*, McCartney is seemingly occupying the same headspace as when he soundtracked TV drama *The Family Way* the previous winter. Macca detractors seize upon moments like this – Lennon, of course, termed it "granny music" – but the lightness of touch works well when set against John's cynicism and George's didacticism. McCartney's bassline is the star of the show, alongside a cheeky Martin brass arrangement.

If there's filler on *Pepper*, then perhaps *Lovely Rita* is the biggest culprit. Even on something as throwaway as this, the coda still provides a bizarre twist and this new mix amps up Ringo's crashing snares.

Lennon's *Good Morning Good Morning*, on the face of it, is an upbeat rocker. But listen to the lyrics carefully, and it's far more nihilistic than it at first appears. It feels heavier, too, in this incarnation and doesn't feel beaten down by the rocky *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club (Reprise)*, as on previous versions. And what can be said about the epochal *A Day In The Life*? Well, the strings remain astonishingly avant garde and the final E chord still sounds like the end of the world. The additional CD of early takes and works in progress are as revelatory as the new stereo mix. The Beatles' back catalogue is packed with eureka moments, of course, but the long gestation period of *Pepper* proved they could graft, too.

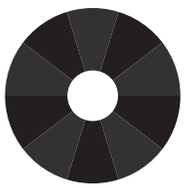
Each track from the album is offered up here, in an alternative form. The *Sgt Pepper...* opener without crowd noise and Martin's brass arrangement shows how much he brought to the party. An instrumental of *With A Little Help...* provides us with the space to enjoy Ringo's solid drumming, and from a historical point of view, it's fascinating to hear the very first take of *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds* where Lennon hasn't yet nailed the best rhythm of the lyrics. McCartney's vocal coda to *Fixing A Hole* actually sounds pretty funky, while *She's Leaving Home* and *Within You Without You* work well as instrumentals. Beatles anoraks will thrill, of course, to a version of *A Day In The Life* with a hummed last note instead of the final version's timeless triple-piano and harmonium chord. Like *Anthology 2*, we get multiple takes of *Strawberry Fields Forever*, too.

Sgt Pepper... is where pop got serious – and this is a seriously good representation of that landmark feat.

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

10/10



Elton John
SONGS FROM THE WEST COAST
UNIVERSAL

There's a curious similarity between the opening, vamping piano chords of the lead single from this 2001 album, *I Want Love*, and John Lennon's *Imagine*. Unintentional, we're sure, but appropriately weighty, as the song is perhaps Elton's most important of the last couple of decades: as personal and intimate as Lennon's was global and oblique.

Elsewhere, songs such as *The Ballad Of The Boy In The Red Shoes* and *Birds* could have come from one of Elton's most powerful and memorable late-70s albums. Perhaps what brought his songwriting out of the doldrums for this record was a remarkable twist in an already unique songwriting partnership: each song was a collaboration with Bernie Taupin, of course, but this was the first time they'd actually written together in person. Which is going some, when you consider this is Elton's 27th album.

This vinyl reissue replicates the 2001 tracklist with 12 songs across two discs. Which means you'll have to head to Spotify for a – very random – selection of bonus tracks such as Junior Vasquez's Earth Mix of *Original Sin* and *Teardrops*, a collaboration with Lulu. This is the first time this album has been widely available on vinyl. We say widely, as its first pressing came last year, when it was included in an ultra-deluxe boxset available only at Burberry – and now on an eBay site near you – which housed a selection of six albums handpicked by Elton to summarise his career between 1970 and 2001. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

6/10

Sting
THE COMPLETE STUDIO COLLECTION
A&M

Last September, Sting jumped aboard the 'vinyl compendium' bandwagon with a thorough collection of his solo works. But it wasn't thorough enough, it seems, as it's now been revised (and the price tag upped from £130 to £200) to add four more LPs. *Songs From The Labyrinth* (2006), *If On A Winter's Night...* (2009) and *Symphonicities* (2010) – as well as his latest, *57th & 9th* – now sit beside the original *Studio Collection*, comprising 1985's *The Dream Of The Blue Turtles*, 1987's double album *...Nothing Like The Sun*, 1991's *The Soul Cages*, 1993's *Ten Summoner's Tales*, 1996's *Mercury Falling*, 1999 and 2003 doubles *Brand New Day* and *Sacred Love* and 2013's *The Last Ship*.

This is a collection of studio works, of course, so one of the highlights from Sting's solo discography – 1986's double live LP *Bring On The Night* – remains absent. And that's what feels uncomfortable about this box: Sting live is a colourful, witty persona. But the Sting presented here (by the label, if not the artist) is an austere, overly serious character, which makes the music of one of Britain's most important songwriters seem far less accessible than it should be. Also, spare a thought for the dedicated collectors who de-trousered £130 on last year's boxset, only to be confronted with a bigger, better version a scant few months later. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

6/10

Bob Marley & The Wailers

EXODUS 40: THE MOVEMENT CONTINUES

ISLAND RECORDS

As the Crown Jewels of Island Records, Bob Marley's back catalogue has been given the bells-and-whistles Deluxe edition treatment on numerous occasions. *Exodus* has been reissued several times before, but Island have pulled out all the stops as Marley's most-loved long-player reaches the Big 4-0. Released alongside various CD incarnations, the vinyl boxset comprises the original album, a 'restatement' of the LP by Ziggy Marley using newly uncovered vocal takes from Bob, plus some new backing tracks and a live disc recorded at London's Rainbow Theatre between 1-4 June 1977. A 12" of *Punky Reggae Party* and *Keep On Moving,* plus two further 7" singles, complete the package. Due to the reverence with which Marley's output has been treated (and the consideration, of course, of its huge earning potential), the remastering programme for the 'Tuff Gong' is up there with Apple's reworking of The Beatles.

Exodus was a landmark for Marley, both professionally and personally. In 1976, he survived an assassination attempt that resulted in a self-imposed exile in London. Partly recorded in Island's studio there, the hi-tech setup means that *Exodus* perches at the summit of his studio work, in terms of high-fidelity production.

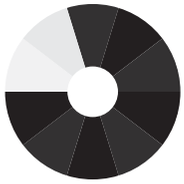
The album itself is a two-part affair. Side One deals with political and religious themes, while Side Two sees Marley at his most sensual and relaxed. Stylistically, it also incorporates blues, soul, classic rock and funk but, with The Wailers having such a strong musical identity, it remains instantly identifiable. There's a beautiful instrumental separation throughout the mix – Aston 'Family Man' Barrett's bass throbs superbly on opener *Natural Mystic* and drummer Carlton Barrett's ticking hi-hats really come alive. Deeper cuts such as *So Much Things To Say*, *Guiltiness* and *The Heathen* will be a revelation to occasional fans, but the six classics that follow earn this LP its 'legend' status (pun intended).

The propulsive groove of the title track is wonderful – its seven-and-a-half minutes fly by. The more lightweight *Jamming* is a pleasing change of tone, while *Turn Your Lights Down Low* and *Three Little Birds* find Marley in cheery mode. Once again, the bass sound is pleasingly fat on *One Love* as the album ends on a positive note.

You'll be playing 'spot the difference' for the most part when listening to Ziggy's 'restatement' version. Although this could have been an intriguing reboot, there are few major differences on show. Discerning ears will catch the odd phrasing and melody tweak, but a sense of déjà vu is the overwhelming reaction: however, the live disc backs up The Wailers' reputation as one of the 70s' great gigging bands. This all adds up to a nice package, but at more than £100, you'll need to consider whether the extras here are really worth the cash, or whether a previous remaster would suffice. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10



Bill Wyman

WHITE LIGHTNIN' – THE SOLO BOX

DEMON

Back in 2015, Bill Wyman's four solo albums were remastered and expanded. They've now been pressed on 180-gram vinyl and collected into this boxset. The packaging is a little dour; the original sleeves – especially 1974's *Monkey Grip* and 1981's *Bill Wyman* – were pretty far out, rendering the rather 'straight' front cover of the boxset, or what the label describe as the "beautiful rigid slipcase", a bit of an anticlimax.

Aesthetics aside, listen out for guests ranging from Van Morrison to The Pointer Sisters on *Monkey Grip* and its follow-up, 1976's *Stone Alone*. *Wyman*'s highlight is the Stones-meets-Numan *Nuclear Reactions* and closes out with *(Si, Si) Je Suis Un Rock Star*, of course – here in its full six-minute incarnation – and there's a curious delight in playing back that 1981 hit on vinyl as opposed to iTunes. Speaking of which, the fourth disc in the set, *Stuff*, appears here for the first time on vinyl, as this album was effectively a 90s-era afterthought, released only in Japan. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

6/10

The Sweet

ARE YOU READY? (THE RCA ERA)

SONY

Despite being an inspiration for such acts as Kiss, Mötley Crüe and Def Leppard, it's odd that The Sweet have yet to be afforded the deep-end ultra-deluxe reissue treatment, especially given the unending stream of reissues of the likes of Slade. But *The RCA Era* is here to set the record straight, and give glam fans something that is more curated than it is kitsch.

There are seven discs here, starting with 1971's *Funny, How Sweet Co-Co Can Be* (which adds five bonus tracks), then onto its follow-up, *Sweet Fanny Adams* (with two bonus tracks and the hit single *Teenage Rampage*). 1974's *Desolation Boulevard* adds four bonus tracks and has its original gatefold sleeve restored. Speaking of sleeves, its follow-up *Give Us A Wink!* has its highly creative (and costly) 'winking eye' cut-out cover fully restored. With two bonus tracks, two Top 10 hits and added disco inflections, *Off The Record* is back in its original gatefold, too. Throw in an unreleased live album and a poster and there's serious weight behind an undervalued group. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

8/10

Emerson Lake & Palmer

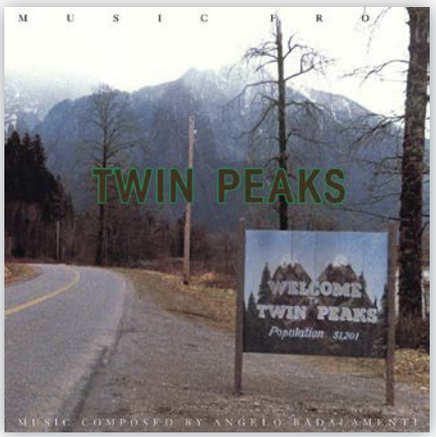
WORKS VOL 1 & 2

BMG

Originally released eight months apart in 1977, this pair of reissues come with a personal letter from Greg Lake to "all friends of vinyl", in which Lake explains the decision to issue them on 140-gram vinyl instead of the oft-preferred 180, claiming it provides better audio quality. The 14 tracks on double album *Vol 1* and 11 on *Vol 2* certainly impress here, although the tracklisting on *Vol 1* serves as a reminder of the divisions that existed in ELP at the time, with each member being granted a side, and Side Four a collaborative affair featuring just two tracks – the band's most successful single *Fanfare For The Common Man* and the 13-minute *Pirates*. Assembled from leftovers, *Vol 2* is stronger than is often acknowledged, with *So Far To Fall* a gem of ELP's catalogue. This reissued pair are essential additions for fans of these most wonderfully excessive of prog heavyweights. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10



Twin Peaks

MUSIC FROM TWIN PEAKS & FIRE WALK WITH ME

RHINO RECORDS

Twin Peaks was film noir at its finest. To celebrate its return to our screens, Rhino has reissued the show's original soundtrack, along with the OST for the *Fire Walk With Me* movie. Lynch enlisted composer Angelo Badalamenti for his groundbreaking scores; Julee Cruise's delicate vocals appear on three tracks, including the Top 10 hit *Falling*, while the instrumental version won a Grammy. There's no underestimating Badalamenti's influence – his music is an integral character in itself. The beautiful melody of *Laura Palmer's Theme* is underpinned by a foreboding melancholy, while the sass of *Audrey's Dance* can't be heard without visualising Sherilyn Fenn swaying seductively in the Double R Diner. *Fire Walk With Me* includes *The Pink Room*, with its filthy riff, and Badalamenti's collaboration with Thought Gang on *A Real Indication*. Just like Lynch's nightmarish vision, these soundtracks may not be everybody's cup of tea. But for those wanting to get lost in their beguiling charms, they're a "damn fine cup of coffee". *Dan Biggane*

VERDICT

8/10

Com Truise

ITERATION

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Since 2010's *Cyanide Sisters* EP, NY-born, LA-based Seth Haley has evolved his largely instrumental, concept-electronica with each release. Each Com Truise EP and album soundtracks the adventures of the world's first robot astronaut, while Haley explores the outer limits of his sonic universe.

He categorises his sound as "mid-fi-synth-wave-slower-motion-funk" – and like the rest of the 'cycle', *Iteration* is an obsessively detailed marshalling of woozily detuned synths, effected 80s drum-machine fills, evolving arpeggios and otherworldly atmospherics. It's a layered soundscape with depth and plenty of contrast, invoking a specific type of nostalgia for a pretty specific audience. Its ultimate appeal is the unique feeling it leaves you with – akin to a dreamy recollection of a theme from a long-abandoned console game, or a sci-fi film soundtrack from a worn VHS tape.

Just like the advanced AI floating alone in space he's soundtracking here, Com Truise is out on his own, in a genre of one – taking the possibilities of 80s synthscapes into unchartered territory. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

7/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Cigarettes After Sex

CIGARETTES AFTER SEX

PARTISAN RECORDS

It's taken nine years for Greg Gonzalez to deliver his debut album, but the result is dreamy slow-burn perfection. *K.* is a gorgeous, smokey opener, a tale of blossoming romance that unfurls amid the most evocative, chiming reverb-lashed guitar and gentle punctuation of a ride cymbal. "When you go away, I still see you," Gonzalez laments on the wistful *Sunsetz,* with yet another swoonsome riff and wonderfully sleepy bassline. The whole record melts into one immersive, dreamy wash with the influence of Mazzy Star, Canadian dream-poppers Alvvays and fellow Brooklyn band The Antlers hanging in the air. Former cinema manager Gonzalez's flair for the filmic is present in the lyrics of *Flash* and *Opera House,* and he perfectly depicts the melodrama of unfolding love on *Apocalypse*: "Your lips, my lips, apocalypse". Deluxe options include a limited-edition picture disc and a bundled T-shirt and silkscreen poster package.
Gary Walker

VERDICT

9/10

Royal Blood

HOW DID WE GET SO DARK?

WARNER

"How did I become a lookalike of someone you used to love?" ponders Mike Kerr in the opening moments of the title track that heralds the much-anticipated return of Royal Blood, accompanied by the ubiquitous crushing octave-bass riff and some less anticipated, breezy "ooh-oohs". It's a question Kerr and drummer Ben Thatcher will be hoping to avoid becoming autobiographical, having hit upon a winning formula with their self-titled 2014 debut – a record that saw the Brighton duo explode irresistibly to global prominence.

After that brilliantly conceived and monstrously successful shot in the arm for British guitar music, which saw Royal Blood win a BRIT for Best British Band, tour with Foo Fighters and make a decent fist of cracking America, the inevitable dilemma hung over the direction of this follow-up: make more of the same muscular, stripped-back hook-heavy rock and be accused of being a one-trick pony; or expand the sound and risk losing the visceral, immediate essence of that debut? Damned if they did or didn't, then.

The opener and title track is a meaty, succinct salvo that bodes well for the rest of the album and extinguishes any early, lingering fears of an ill-advised reinvention.

Lights Out is built around another bruising riff, with some squelchy synth bass the first suggestion that things may be about to take a funkier turn on album two. The cowbells, harmonies and shakers on *I Only Lie When I Love You* point further in that direction; that synth sound returns on *She's Creeping*, with a pitch-bend bass effect that sounds uncomfortably like bass wah, some gloriously gnarly fuzz, more shakers and some new-found falsetto from Kerr. It's Royal Blood alright, but with a groove… and, in all honesty, it's not the album's high point.

The record's title none-too-obliquely poses another question that becomes pertinent throughout its 10 tracks. Much of Kerr's writing appears deeply personal and hints, heart on sleeve, at travails in life and love between albums. *Hook Line & Sinker* finds him confessing to being a "slave to your addiction, your affection and your friction". A jaunty organ riff lies at the heart of the plaintive, pleading QOTSA-like *Hole In Your Heart*, and on *Sleep*, Kerr's at it again, confessing: "I just can't help myself, thinking you're with someone else". Oh Mike…

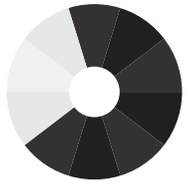
Pleasingly, though, throughout *How Did We Get So Dark?* the duo maintain their flair for economy, with nothing outstaying its welcome and Thatcher a pulverising presence. *Look Like You Know* has an infectious stomping disco beat, and the moment when its instrumental break – featuring a filthy three-note riff and bone-shaking tumbling tom pattern – roars back into a soaring chorus guarantees it'll be a nailed-on festival favourite.

It's a case of difficult second album safely negotiated, and the path to hugeness continues to beckon Royal Blood through the darkness. Vinyl options include a Super Deluxe edition, a signed version of the standard vinyl available through Amazon and a coloured-vinyl edition.

Gary Walker

VERDICT

7/10



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Dan Auerbach

WAITING ON A SONG

EASY EYE SOUND

Auerbach's second solo album, after 2009's masterful *Keep It Hid*, isn't really anything like its predecessor. Instead, *Waiting On A Song*, like his soulful 2015 Arcs album, sees him mining a fresh seam of his musical interests. The result is a feelgood "love letter to Nashville", featuring seven co-writes with Music City legend John Prine.

The album was all-but cut live, with veteran Memphis session men Gene Chrisman on drums and Bobby Wood on keys and Johnny Cash bassist Dave Roe contributing expert lines with old-school know-how. Duane Eddy adds inimitable twang to a number of cuts, and Mark Knopfler beams in some picking on *Shine On Me*. Although, confusingly enough, this track could easily be a lost George Harrison tune from his sessions for 1987's *Cloud Nine*.

Auerbach is clearly having fun here, and his phenomenal talents as a vocalist, guitarist, songwriter and producer shine through every track. So long as you don't expect the attitude and edge he brings to The Black Keys – although there are traces on the funky, percussive *Cherrybomb* – you'll likely find a song on here to help soundtrack your summer. The album's available on limited translucent yellow/black vinyl, and on limited-edition 8-track (with an autographed vintage 8-track player). *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

7/10

Saint Etienne

HOME COUNTIES

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS

From Bowie to The Prodigy, there are countless music heroes who have sprung forth from the home counties. But the term has always been so unhip – while the capital has always been seen as the epitome of cool – that it's become almost a swearword over the years. So thank you, Saint Etienne, for heading out to the 'burbs to celebrate a region a vast proportion of musicians have come from and a vast amount of music is consumed.

As this is the vinyl edition, I gave in to temptation and moved the needle inland: I didn't want to enter the home counties from the signposted *Urban Clearway* (or rather on Side One, Track One). I wanted to gatecrash this concept album and cut to the chase. And on the first listen to *Dive*, the fifth of the set's 19 tracks, I can say that Saint Etienne are in rude health. *Dive* has a *Pale Movie* vibe fans of their mid-90s era will find familiar (and fans of a 90s great lost hope, Espiritu, might find it even more exciting).

From the familiar straight into a left turn, as *Dive* transitions into a gorgeous choral piece, *Church Pew Furniture Restorer*. At just under two minutes in length, I worry that the trio tapped into something magical here, but were too overawed by its potency to take it further. It's a tantalising taste of how a follow-up might sound: if not an album, then an accompanying 10" EP. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

7/10

Ride

WEATHER DIARIES

WICHITA RECORDINGS

Despite reuniting two years ago, Ride have taken their time to put together this comeback and the approach has paid dividends. Their first new music in more than 20 years is a pleasing mixture of the beatific shoegaze sound that made their name back in the early 90s, together with the more traditional songcraft of 1994's *Carnival Of Light* and its follow up, *Tarantula*.

There are sleek electronics to add to the chiming guitars of opener *Lannoy Point*, and they accelerate for the more urgent protest of *Charm Assault* with the harmonies of Mark Gardener and Andy Bell a nice callback to days of old. Producer Erol Alkan (Klaxons, Mystery Jets) brings yet more of an electro slant to the chopped-up vocals on anti-Brexit track *All I Want*, with drummer Laurence Colbert on fine, pounding form. The woozy *Home Is A Feeling* returns to their early days – its swirling atmospherics are straight out of the Kevin Shields school. The album's centrepiece and title track is an epic seven-minute beauty that takes its sweet time. *Rocket Silver Symphony* is yet another interesting melding of fleeting electronic elements and their traditional overdriven guitars. It's trumped, though, by the muscular *Lateral Alice* and the lush harmonies of *Cali*. There's a tailing off, but by then, Ride have made it over the finishing line. A very welcome return. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Beach House

B-SIDES AND RARITIES

BELLA UNION

This compilation of lesser-known gems collates every song the Baltimore dream-poppers have recorded that didn't make the cut for any of their six albums. The earliest material here is 2005's *Rain In Numbers* and there are a clutch of songs from the band's most prolific periods – 2009 to 2010 and 2014. Despite the B-side status of these songs, the quality is consistently high, and the sedated aura that envelopes the whole record gives this decade-spanning anthology an immersive continuity. The guitar leadline on *Equal Mind*, recorded during the sessions for 2012's *Bloom*, is absolutely delicious. The song missed the cut for that album, purely because it has the same tempo as *Other People*, but it's a treasure. *Saturn Song* emerged from a piano loop written for those sessions, and originally appeared on a compilation of space-related songs released in 2014. It's sparse and wonderfully enchanting. A pair of songs that didn't fit on 2010's *Teen Dream* – *White Moon*, present here in the form of an iTunes live version, and *The Arrangement* – are also revisited, and another iTunes session cut – the enthralling, downbeat *Norway* – appears with a different bridge from the original. *I Do Not Care For The Winter Sun*, originally a free unmastered internet release, is finally completed. A surprisingly great starting point for the uninitiated. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10

The Magpie Salute

THE MAGPIE SALUTE

EAGLE ROCK

Tipping their hat to a British superstition, former Black Crowe Rich Robinson's new band The Magpie Salute (mostly Crowes alumni) have served up something quite special here. Nine of the 10 tracks are covers recorded live in the studio in front of an audience. It's a diverse selection of well-chosen songs, including the Crowes' *What Is Home* and *Wiser Time*. Nothing unexpected, you might say, but their take on vibraphone jazzer Bobby Hutcherson's *Goin' Down South* is splendid.

Pink Floyd's *Fearless* is played with a pretty straight bat, but it's still a joy and so is The Faces' wonderful Ronnie Lane-penned slowie *Glad And Sorry*. Robinson's funky guitar playing sparkles throughout their version of Bob Marley's *Time Will Tell*, too.

Best of all is the one new song, *Omission*, a swaggering rocker that can duke it out with the very best Crowes riffathons. A bright future surely awaits – we salute you!

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

8/10

Royal Trux

PLATINUM TIPS + ICE CREAM

DOMINO

Anyone who saw Jennifer Herrema's unpredictable live shows with her post-Royal Trux outfit RTX in the late 2000s can be forgiven for questioning the wisdom of a reunited Trux making their recorded comeback with a live album. But 17 years after their last record, the trippy, laidback Southern rock of *Pound For Pound*, Herrema and Neil Hagerty have successfully reanimated their grimy, scrawled-over narco boogie.

Hagerty and Herrema have been busy with their own ventures since 2001, but the clamour surrounding Royal Trux's reissued albums, which have trickled out since 2010, saw them reform in 2015 as a touring entity. And given their albums always sounded live, *Platinum Tips + Ice Cream* – available on heavyweight vinyl – makes perfect sense: fresh interpretations of their most synapse-bothering and pendulously deep, bluesy art-rock tracks played live and unrehearsed, with all the feral intensity and stoned playfulness that made them so essential.

Chris Parkin

VERDICT

7/10

Sufjan Stevens et al

PLANETARIUM

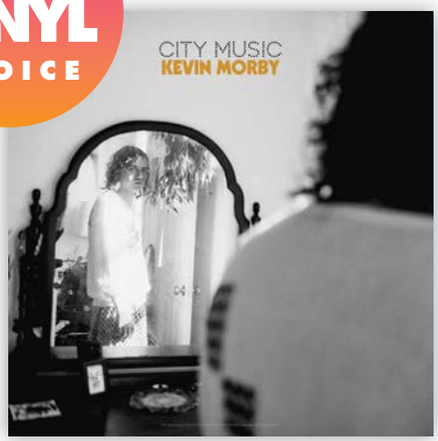
4AD

Even an educated guess informed by the names of those involved – Stevens, Bryce Dessner of The National, Nico Muhly and drummer James McAlister – won't come close to capturing what the 76 minutes of *Planetarium*, a conceptual song cycle about the solar system, sound like. Early tracks offer an electronically embellished nod towards the piano-driven simplicity of Stevens' *Carrie & Lowell*, but vocals suddenly pitch up or disappear behind vocoder effects. Opening track *Jupiter* burbles away beautifully until it's shredded by machine-gun beats. It's almost impossible to feel at ease during initial listens, so frequently are your expectations confounded. The orchestral leanings of Dessner and Muhly ebb and flow, taking flight during the majestic *Pluto* only for the track to then retreat to a Stevens vocal atop some skittering synth. 15-minute near-finale *Earth* is almost a précis of all that has gone before, leaving *Mercury* to conclude proceedings with a demure beauty. A true space oddity. *Gareth James*

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE



Kevin Morby

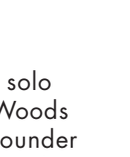
CITY MUSIC

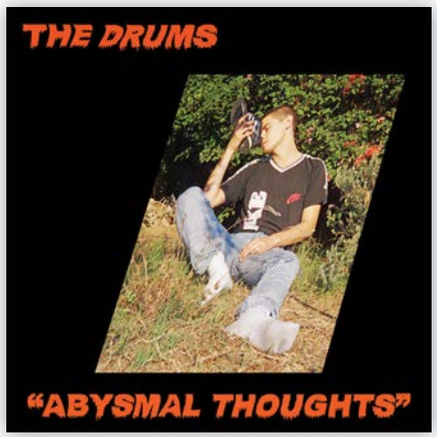
DEAD OCEANS

City Music, the fourth solo album from former Woods bassist and Babies founder Kevin Morby, is a wistful love letter to the cities in the US songwriter's life. A rapid follow-up to 2016's excellent *Singing Saw*, its opener *Come To Me Now* is a beautiful widescreen tale of numbing solitude, beaters falling gently on toms, and Morby's Dylan-esque vocals floating wearily into the city air. The title track takes its time and builds from gently, chiming guitar beginnings to a clattering rabble-rouser. *Crybaby* has a healthy splicing of The Velvet Underground in its DNA, as does the fragile, world-weary *Dry Your Eyes*. The 100-second blast of *1-2-3-4* is a wanton tribute to The Ramones, featuring the kind of economic, effortlessly cool guitar The Strokes used to excel at. Indeed, if there's one city above all others that is most audibly ingrained in *City Music*, it's New York. Morby paints from a wide palette and, across his quartet of records, has become a songwriter of rarified quality. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

9/10





The Drums

ABYSMAL THOUGHTS

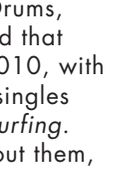
ANTI

You remember The Drums, don't you? They had that massive debut in 2010, with the astronomically catchy singles *Best Friend* and *Let's Go Surfing*. And then we all forgot about them, despite two slightly limp subsequent albums having been released. Now essentially a solo project for frontman Jonny Pierce, the skewed pop sensibility of the early songs is promoted to the front and centre, resulting in a rather promising return to the limelight.

Pursuing the traditionally rich vein of matching heartache with insistent melody, Pierce is at his most introspective on *If All We Share (Means Nothing)*, while the title track goes all-out new wave via *Graceland*. *Rich Kids* takes an enjoyably acerbic swipe at its subject matter. It might not be the purest poetry, but the word 'dickheads' always sounds magnificent when sung. Having faded from view, *Abysmal Thoughts* makes a compelling case for giving The Drums a second crack.
Gareth James

VERDICT

7/10



Girlpool

POWERPLANT

ANTI

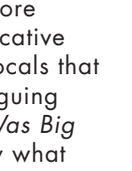
Anyone expecting more of the sparsely evocative bass, guitar and vocals that characterised 2015's intriguing debut *Before The World Was Big* will be a little surprised by what they find in the 12 tracks and 28 minutes of Girlpool's second album, *Powerplant*. The LA duo have roped in Miles Wintner on drums and the enhanced heft suits these songs perfectly, stuttering into action some 50 seconds into fairly representative opening track, *123*.

There's a clear inclination here towards memorable riffs and nifty hooks, including a wonderfully woozy chorus in the title track that gives way to an inebriated piano line. *She Goes By* shimmers frenetically, shifting gear numerous times, while closer *Static Somewhere* slowly builds from a jaggedly malevolent guitar line towards its fuzzy and ragged conclusion.

Factor in some neatly wry lyrics, plus a variable sonic palette that at times evokes Jeff Buckley's *Sketches...* and *Powerplant* is quite the accomplishment.
Gareth James

VERDICT

8/10



Peter Perrett

HOW THE WEST WAS WON

DOMINO

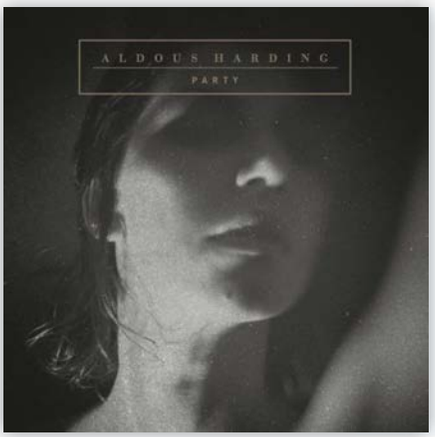
It's been more than 20 years since The Only Ones' frontman and songwriter Peter Perrett released any new music, so this debut solo album comes as a very pleasant surprise. He remains instantly recognisable as the voice behind *Another Girl, Another Planet* and these 10 fresh offerings are packed with the spikiness of his post-punk pomp years of the late 70s. You can hear how Perrett influenced the likes of The Libertines – who he made a handful of live appearances with – early Arctic Monkeys and I Am Kloot here.

The opening title track cocks a snook at American imperialism and celebrity culture with hints of The Velvet Underground's *Sweet Jane* thrown in for good measure, and the slow-building *An Epic Story* is a finely honed slice of power pop. In the main, Perrett keeps the arrangements stripped back, but the swirling album centrepiece *Living In My Head* is impressively ambitious. An unexpected delight from a maverick talent.

Steve Harnell

VERDICT

8/10



Aldous Harding

PARTY

4AD

Produced by John Parish and recorded in the celebrated PJ Harvey collaborator's home city of Bristol, *Party* is the second album by New Zealand's Aldous Harding. *Blend* is an understated acoustic opener before the majestic *Imagining My Man* gives a first glimpse into the kaleidoscopic brilliance at play, sorrowful vocals and sparing piano chords juxtaposed with the joyful 'heys' of children and some tasteful guitar work.

The dextrous folky fingerpicking of *Living The Classics*, *I'm Sorry* and *The World Is Looking For You* are evidence of a rare grasp of refined delicacy. The influence of Kate Bush and Scott Walker flicker over proceedings as Harding's voice bends in myriad directions, with the title track evoking the tender brilliance of early Joanna Newsom. First single *Horizon* is a masterclass in grand, sorrowful restraint. A bonus 7" with limited pre-orders, featuring new track *Elation*, makes this one of 2017's must-buy new albums.

Gary Walker

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Public Service Broadcasting

EVERY VALLEY

PIAS

As apologies go, this has to be up there. London trio Public Service Broadcasting tackle the complex topic of life in the Valleys through the mining crisis and beyond, effectively a sorry to the people of South Wales for missing them off their last tour. The resulting record is another masterpiece in storytelling, using real archived audio from miners, as well as new interviews carried out by J.Willgoose, Esq. combined with compelling beats and beautiful strings. Recorded in a former workers' institute in Ebbw Vale, collaborations with the Manics' James Dean Bradfield, Haiku Salut and 9Bach's Lisa Jen Brown help bring to life the resilience, loss and love of those communities in the mid-80s. What concept album about Wales would be complete without a male-voice choir? Beaufort Male Choir's *Take Me Home* packs a powerful punch at the end of a beautifully put together and educational album.

Laura Williams

VERDICT

9/10

Ani DiFranco

BINARY

RIGHTEOUS BABE/AVELINE

The 'lazy teen' cliché wasn't coined for Ani DiFranco. By 14, the Buffalo, New York singer-songwriter was touring her own songs; by 16, she was living alone; at 18, she set up her own label, Righteous Babe; and at 20, she released her self-titled debut album. Nearly 30 years later, the touchpaper that sparks her is still the hope of a better world.

Like DiFranco's previous 19 albums, *Binary* – available via Pledge on 140g vinyl with lyric booklet or in a limited edition of 50 test pressings – doesn't concern itself with despair. Instead, her indefatigable defiance powers 11 bittersweet, contemporary alt-pop songs recorded in the run-up to last year's US election. "I was done at 16, showing up for class/I was out there in the rain, learning how to kick some ass," she sings on *Play God*. With assistance from guests Maceo Parker and Bon Iver's Justin Vernon, she's still at it. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

7/10

Broken Social Scene

HUG OF THUNDER

CITY SLANG

A reignited fondness for live performance and a desire to deliver celebratory music during dark times have curtailed a lengthy hiatus for this unorthodox band. Broken Social Scene's 15-strong personnel still possess their tendency to traverse genres and textures, sounding like Arcade Fire, Fleet Foxes, Big Star and Christine And The Queens, among others, across the 12 largely exhilarating tracks of *Hug Of Thunder*.

It is, perhaps, a little front-loaded, with the elastic-funk majesty of *Stay Happy*, the reverb-drenched sunrise-in-a-song swoon of *Skyline* and the punk-pop wriggle of *Protest Song* all clocking in before the halfway mark. What follows is a little less instant, but far from disappointing. The skittering *Please Take Me With You* evokes a more demure Postal Service, while *Gonna Get Better* is a wonkily euphoric statement of intent. A few songs veer too close to the ever-anthemic middle of the road, but the highs are many and varied. *Gareth James*

VERDICT

8/10

London Grammar

TRUTH IS A BEAUTIFUL THING

MINISTRY OF SOUND

Four years after acclaimed debut *If You Wait*, London Grammar return with a confident second that adds extra subtlety and dimension to their sound. Opener *Rooting For You* and the Jon Hopkins-imprinted *Big Picture* mark out the sonic territory. Hannah Reid's voice is extraordinary, moving fluidly between tremulous low notes and a skyscraping high register, against a backdrop of damped, echoing guitars, effects-soaked pianos, subtle Eno-esque synths and orchestral swells, while a blend of organic and electronic beats provide the necessary decompression.

Over the course of the whole album, the similarity of the compositions can wear your ears. But then, at times, the arrangments are so well crafted and Reid's voice is so expressive, it's a hypnotic and truly immersive listen. The cinematic title track (unusually, it's the album's closer) is itself a thing of beauty, leaving the listener with a hint of a darker direction to come. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Roger Waters

IS THIS THE LIFE WE REALLY WANT?

SONY

In the last decade, Roger Waters' live extravaganzas have seen him enter the record books as the highest grossing solo act of all time. He's been trading on former Pink Floyd glories, of course, and you wonder if he's sold himself short in some respect. Here's the remarkable thing about his first new rock album in 25 years (2005's opera *Ça Ira* doesn't count) – vast swathes of this new album could stand shoulder-to-shoulder with his best work in the Floyd, and don't seem in the slightest bit out of place.

Callbacks to his old band abound, and this fired-up, politically charged album, heralded as "an unflinching commentary on the modern world and uncertain times", is right up there with his best work.

David Gilmour may bill himself as the 'voice and guitar' of Pink Floyd, but this LP makes one thing abundantly clear: Waters was very much the architect of the overall sound of the band. Quite apart from his lyrical input into Floyd, the structural feel of the arrangements here is clearly reminiscent of parts of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here*, *Animals* and *The Wall*.

"Our parents made us what we are, or was it God?/Who gives a fuck, it's never really over," spits Waters on the spoken-word intro to opener *When We Were Young* that gradually coalesces into focus and brings to mind the famous heartbeats that open *Dark Side...*'s *Speak To Me*.

Déjà Vu sees Waters in philosophical mode: "If I had been God, I believe I could have done a better job," and there's a knowing little chuckle buried deep in the mix to suggest this may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek. *Picture That* ups the Floyd ante with some very *Wish You Were Here*-era keyboard washes and finds Waters angrily railing against a "leader with no fucking brains".

Waters' band, which includes serial collaborator-with-the-stars Jonathan Wilson on guitar and super session drummer Joey Waronker, don't shy away from sounding like Floyd, although soloing is kept to a minimum. Producer Nigel Godrich's fingerprints are all over the title track, a graceful and chiming mid-tempo song featuring stabbing string-section interjections with a distinctly Radiohead flavour. It's a damning indictment of small-minded Brexiteers and little Englanders: "Fear drives the mills of modern men/Fear keeps us all in line/Fear of all those foreigners, fear of all their crimes/Is this the life we really want?"

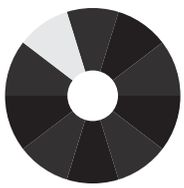
Smell The Roses once again ladles on the reference points to his former band, both instrumentally and tonally, but is none the worse for that. It's Waters at his poetic best, with even a hint of an understated guitar solo. After the storm, comes the calm. A trio of interwoven piano and acoustic-led ballads draw things to a close – a reflective ending to the previous hour of well-aimed anger and frustration.

Floyd fans rejoice – this is the album you've been waiting for since *The Wall*. The wishy-washy *The Endless River* be damned.

Steve Harnell

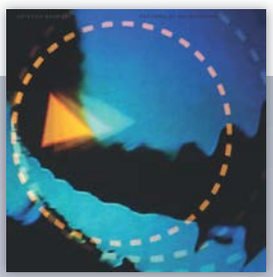
VERDICT

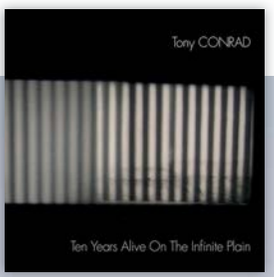
9/10



ROUNDUP Genre Hopping 'Nu' new age

Every issue, **Chris Parkin** uncovers the latest gems in a particular genre. This month, he looks at the resurgent interest in the work of new age and spiritual artists…





THERE'S RENEWED INTEREST IN MUSIC OF A NEW AGE, SPIRITUAL AND TRANSCENDENTAL BENT, WITH A FRESH WAVE OF ARTISTS SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT

With news headlines harshing the mellow of even the most optimistic right now, it's no coincidence there's renewed interest in music of a new age, spiritual and transcendental bent. First-pressing albums by artists such as Laraaji and Iasos are worth a fortune and these pioneers have been joined by a new wave of musicians seeking similar enlightenment, including Joshua Abrams & Natural Information Society, whose *Simultonality* (tak:til) we reviewed last issue. The most notable release in this niche sphere is *The Ecstatic Music Of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda* (Luaka Bop). In the late 70s – a decade after the death of her husband, John – cosmic-jazz harpist Alice Coltrane opened a Vedic ashram in California and, between 1983 and 1995 made four cassette-only albums for her devotees. This double-vinyl compilation, with two extra tracks and in-depth booklets about the recordings, is a heady brew of ecstatic synths, gospel-like Sanskrit chants and soulful grooves. It's up there with Coltrane's best work.

Japanese percussionist Midori Takada's *Through The Looking Glass* is another record with numinous power. We Release Whatever The Fuck We Want and Palto Flats have reissued this 1983 album on single (33rpm) and double (45rpm) vinyl, with liner notes examining the genesis of an album that's become a Holy Grail among collectors. And you can hear why: *Through The Looking Glass* is a four-song masterclass in hypnotic, celestial minimalism that borrows from African and Asian percussive traditions and modern ambience and somehow manages to set the standard for cosmic electronica-makers today.

Better known than Takada is 70-year-old New York musician and former bongo player for the beat writers, Charlemagne Palestine. His *Strumming Music* – a 52-minute piece of rapturous piano minimalism that has a discombobulating effect – was reissued recently, and now there's a collaborative live album with UK mystic-rock duo Grumbling Fur. A lavish gatefold release, *Ommingg And Schlommingg* (Important) sees the drone merchants meeting on a smoke-fogged astral plane to perform bewitching ritual music – clattering, bowing, looping swirls of sound – for another world. On the same label is Caterina Barbieri's double-album *Patterns Of Consciousness*, a synapse-frying analogue synth fest that's more intense, but no less transportive.

There's also a release from minimal music's other renaissance man, Tony Conrad. A year after his death, the musician and filmmaker's unreleased 1972 performance *Ten Years Alive On The Infinite Plain* is now given the double-vinyl treatment by Superior Viaduct. With its roots in his Theatre Of Eternal Music project in the 60s, this 90-minute piece features Conrad on violin, plus no-wave guitarist Rhys Chatham and electronic artist Laurie Spiegel. Conrad's dedication to extended composition transforms something that starts off relatively din-like into trance-inducing music.

With reissues from prime kosmische acts Cluster and Popol Vuh, and releases by contemporary artists on a cosmic-explorer tip – acts like Floating Points and Lejsovka & Freund, on the reliably wonderful MIE label – now is a good time to tune in and float off. ●

BLUE
ELLA
PLANAR MAGNETIC HEADPHONES

£699 *www.bluemic.com*

They're pricey, but aimed at vinyl lovers. **Andy Jones** checks out Blue's Ella headphones…

Blue's Mo-fi and Lola headphones threw away the rule book when it came to headphone design, largely down to the way they encircled your head, almost clamping on with a neat, uncurling headband design that has six joints – resulting in a perfect fit. They were received very well by the hi-fi and studio press and now we have the Ellas, which feature the same headband design, but Blue say they have thrown that rule book away yet again…

There are two features that Blue is talking about here. The first is that they are Planar Magnetic headphones and have driver membranes less than 50 microns thick, driven by magnets to produce the sound. What this tech talk means – as well as sounding like an early Human League lyric – is that the resulting sound should be crystal clear and distortion-free. Yet Planar Magnetic types of 'phones are often best matched with amps, as they tend to deliver a lower sound – so a built-in amp is Blue's second new feature. The company says that it's a winning combination "whether you're enjoying the Zeppelin reissue boxsets or Pink Floyd on 180-gram vinyl". So, these are aimed at you…

FACE HUGGERS

First, let's look at the design. The headband was apparently "inspired by the finely tuned suspension of a Formula 1 race car", although to my sci-fi addled mind, they're more like the bikes from *Tron*. The design allows them to extend from their 'closed' position around your head, rather like a face hugger from *Alien* – there I go again. The earpieces fit very snugly against your ears, and as these are closed-back 'phones, the outside world disappears, although isolation is not up there with others we've tested (such as last issue's twice-as-pricey AKGs).

The Ellas are not light; consequently, you'll need the top band touching your head, otherwise the 'phones will slip down – a tad annoying for some. Otherwise, they're very comfortable. Having a mere cloth-based, albeit large, carry case seems a little mean at this price, although the cables feel properly 'audiophile' and are strikingly different, as you might expect from Blue. There are two cables included: a 1.2m one (not long enough) with built-in controls for iTunes and a 3m one.

The amp is switched on by rotating a dial at the connector. You don't need to use the amp at all, but it does introduce a significant volume increase – so be careful. You'll also need to charge the 'phones to use the amp – that will last for 12 hours of playing time. Handily, when the amp is engaged, the 'phones switch off when you close them to save charge. Finally, the amp also has an On+ setting for a subtle bass boost.

So, to the sound – and all of those claims are justified. The reproduction really is crystal clear, not in a flat, studio 'phone, harsh way, but in a gently coloured, vibey way. The soundstage is pristine right across the board, the bass is tight and defined – and I never felt the need to engage that extra On+ bass, no matter how subtle it is. Vocals and guitars sound as rich as you might hear sitting on the other side of the glass in a recording studio, and when you get dreamy, you're right there in the zone, music washing over you. I tested them next to my current favourite 'phones, the similarly priced Beyerdynamic DT 1990s, and the sound is right up there.

With the built-in amp, Blue have clearly got mobile listeners in mind, as well as vinyl heads. While I'm not convinced the weight and high isolation make for a good mobile combo, for vinyl lovers or those enjoying the downloads that come with them, I can't recommend these enough. ●

VERDICT

PROS

- FANTASTIC IMMERSIVE SOUND
- SNUGLY COMFORTABLE
- GOOD ISOLATION
- YOU MAY LOVE THE DESIGN…

CONS

- …OR YOU MAY NOT
- THE PRICE IS HIGH
- THEY'RE A LITTLE ON THE HEAVY SIDE

SCORE
28/33⅓

ELIPSON OMEGA 100 TURNTABLE
WITH ORTOFON OM10 CARTRIDGE

£300 *www.avoke.co.uk 01628 484968*

Searching for a budget turntable that combines a low price with style and top-quality sound to boot? **Paul Rigby** wonders if he's found a real contender with the Elipson Omega 100

The Elipson Omega 100's striking design benefits from bespoke components created in-house

One of the overriding themes of the modern budget turntable is how much the genre is dominated by both Pro-Ject and Rega – to such an extent, that even many third-party brands feature complete design clones, or 'guest' parts from the two outfits. That's where French company Elipson may appeal to those looking for a unique design approach, because this turntable's construction and parts are born and bred in-house. The only familiar item on the belt-driven Omega 100 is the free Ortofon OM 10 moving magnet cartridge that hangs off the carbon-fibre arm: a surprisingly expensive addition in a budget design such as this, as carbon fibre is normally associated with high-end turntables.

Known as the Orbital Tension Tonearm, the twin-bearing arm design features an anti-skating wheel directly above the bearing. It's more efficient, but also more stylish. The only problem is there's no anti-skating gauge readout, so you don't know how much force you've applied.

There's no damped arm-lift support,

No damped arm-lift support may well make for better sound quality

THE MORE ADORNMENTS ON A BUDGET MACHINE, THE MORE POTENTIAL VIBRATION IS CREATED – WHICH CAN RESULT IN REDUCED SOUND QUALITY

which some might see as an issue, but I view as a 'good thing' in terms of sound quality. The more adornments hanging off a budget turntable, the more potential vibration is created; which can result in reduced sound quality. You're also supplied with an integrated lid: remove it while you play your records, then place it on the deck to protect against dust when you've finished.

LET IT FLOW

The Omega 100 is a near 'plug and go' model; you do have to add a few bits and pieces out of the box, which is fully covered by the included instruction manual, but the set-up is pretty straightforward. For those of you who are familiar and confident with turntables and like to make sure the turntable is in proper working order, don't be too perturbed by the relatively high tracking force of the cartridge, which is set at the OM10's upper limit. The figure is required for the OM10 to work successfully in the Omega 100; reducing it will only result in cartridge mistracking. For those who don't have a clue about tracking force and the like, don't worry about it.

Spinning Stevie Wonder's *Love's In Need Of Love Today* from *Songs In The Key Of Life,* I'm impressed by the open and naturalistic way the midrange is presented. Space and air is abundant around the soundstage, so you never feel the vocals and the instruments are crowding each other. For the price, I was also impressed with the tonal realism from the treble-infused cymbals, especially their extended reverb tails. Bass is vibrant and responsive and has playful bounce and a characterful weight. Next, I turn to Hawkind's *Space Ritual Sundown V.2* LP and the tracks *Space* and *Orgone Accumulator*. Even with the chaotic rock arrangement, the midrange insight and associated clarity reveals information to delight and, indeed, amaze before the rocking *Orgone*'s guitar-and-drum attack shows the Elipson can rock with the best of them; a pleasing lack of low-frequency blooming allows more detail to hit the ear.

For the price, the Omega 100 provides a tonally impressive presentation. Music flows easily, providing rock with swagger and a fragility to balladic fare. The Omega 100 provides plenty of upgradable options, too – a later cartridge upgrade will enhance sound quality – adding to its useful life and value. ●

VERDICT

PROS

- AIRY SOUNDSTAGE
- DETAILED MIDS
- ELEGANT DESIGN
- SPEED STABILITY
- SPEED SWITCH
- VALUE FOR MONEY

CONS

- CAREFUL CARTRIDGE SETUP REQUIRED
- NO ANTI-SKATE GAUGE
- NO ARM LIFT

SCORE

30/33⅓

PRO-JECT VT-E

VERTICAL TURNTABLE WITH ORTOFON OM 5E CARTRIDGE

£269 *www.henleydesigns.co.uk 01235 511166*

If a small-footprint turntable that screams 'fun', 'quirky' and 'different' is high on the agenda, then you might need to go vertical. **Paul Rigby** reviews the Pro-Ject VT-E

If you were in a board meeting at Turntables Inc and were eager for promotion, the very last idea you would put forward as a new design for the future Autumn campaign is a turntable that stands on its end. The notion that gravity is pulling on either the arm or, more importantly, on the record itself as it swings up against this natural force, is a mighty problem. Most turntable designers have to tackle a million and one issues on a day-to-day basis when the turntable is laying nice and flat on a sturdy shelf, never mind teetering on its edge!

We saw a rash of vertical turntables in the early 80s from the likes of Mitsubishi, Technics and Sharp, so is this another short-lived fad? Not according to Pro-Ject, who have released a vertical turntable of their own that's basically a Pro-Ject Elemental audiophile turntable on its side, fitted with an aluminium tonearm plus £50 worth of Ortofon OM 5E moving magnet cartridge. In terms of installation, there's little to actually do except attach a rear foot 'stand' with two screws, IKEA-fashion, the belt and the power supply, then place the thing on a shelf or fit it to a wall with the supplied mountings and away you go.

STRAIGHT UP

To the beginner, it's amazing that everything doesn't fall to the floor in a heap.

Pro-Ject have been clever, though, adding a spring to the tonearm that applies the correct downforce to keep the stylus tracking the grooves. More than that, a clamp secures the record to the fibreboard platter. The gold-plated RCA cables (to attach to the phono connectors of your amp or separate phono amplifier) are located on the rear.

But does it sound any good? Well, it's not going to compete with another turntable reviewed in this issue, the Elipson Omega 100. But, frankly, to compare the VT-E with any regular design is like comparing chalk with cheese. Still, we've heard vertical turntables before and this one stands out from the crowd – basically, because the general presentation is focused admirably, with a precision in the upper midrange that gives jazz music both pace and life. In a more rocking environment, it provides strummed guitars with enough infusion

of air to impart the notion of power and character, while bass retains an admirable impact.

HORSES FOR COURSES

In short, the VT-E should not be looked at in the same way as you'd consider a standard deck and, because of this, it's a difficult product to rate. Focusing purely on its sonic qualities, when compared directly to some of the top-dollar audiophile designs on the market, it doesn't fare as well. However, the VT-E isn't designed to be audiophile and it's unfair to compare it to an audiophile design. The VT-E is a lifestyle deck. It's targetted at that market and should never leave it. As such, it's head and shoulders above every other lifestyle design on the market – and therefore deserves a high score. More than that, the VT-E actually makes other lifestyle turntables out there seem nothing more than toys: at least in sonic terms, if not in pure build quality. Might I remind you, the heart and soul of the VT-E derives from one of the most respected budget 'audiophile' designs on the market? Hence, the VT-E emerges, fully formed, from a good place, in hi-fi terms.

If you need a 'fun' turntable, but really can't afford the space that a standard turntable design demands, then look seriously at the VT-E. The design will make you smile and, in relative terms, so will the sound quality. ●

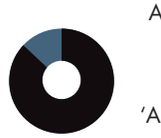
VERDICT

PROS

- IT ACTUALLY WORKS!
- PLUG AND GO
- MUSICAL MIDRANGE
- NEAT AND TIDY BASS
- LOW FOOTPRINT

CONS

- DISTINCTIVE DESIGN MIGHT DRAW A NEGATIVE 'MARMITE' RESPONSE
- NOT 'AUDIOPHILE' SOUND QUALITY



SCORE

25/33 1/3

REGA RP10
WITH NAIM AMP, SOPRA SPEAKERS AND REL SUBS

£5,498 *www.rega.co.uk – reviewed at winchesterhifi.co.uk*

Rega design and make turntables for all budgets. **Ian Peel** finds out how their ultra-high-end deck fares when paired with some top separates and some heavy doses of Stevie Nicks and ABC…

This month, we're travelling up to the very top of the turntable ivory tower, to the floor marked Rega, where the Essex-based hi-fi stalwarts have the RP10 at the top of their range. Coming in at an eye-watering £5,498 (including the Aphelion MC cartridge), we had to match it up with a similarly salubrious set of separates. So we added one of Rega's Aria phono stages (£798), notable for its full aluminium casing to completely screen any stray RH signals. Next up, a two-stage amplification system courtesy of Naim Audio: a NAC-N 272 streaming pre-amp (£3,469) and a NAP 250 DR power amp (£3,680).

In terms of speakers, a very striking pair of Sopra No.1s from Focal (£6,999) complemented – and this was a first for me, too – a pair of (as opposed to a single unit) sub-woofers: the S/5 SHO from REL Acoustics (£1,999). That's a mortgage-sized system; more than 20 grand in total. So let's play some records!

First up, something contemporary: ABC's *The Lexicon Of Love II* (the boxset edition of the vinyl). And how glorious it sounds on lead single *Viva Love*. Every nuance is present, every string flourish reproduced beautifully. The overall effect is joyous, with Martin Fry's vocals coming across as particularly urgent. The drums and percussion are audible in a way I hadn't noticed on Spotify: on vinyl, and on this system, they're very much to the fore, almost in Technicolour.

To put the system through a tougher test, I replaced ABC with Rhino's recent reissue of Stevie Nicks' *The Wild Heart* from 1983. The production, the songwriting and the instrumentation on this album has always come across as somewhat muddy, clunky and – at best – playing it safe. That much I know from my old CD copy. But the combination of the re-press and the Rega really lifts the music up, lifts the spirits and turns something 'very 1983' into something 'very 2017'. So I headed straight to the album's

pivotal track, *I Will Run To You*, produced by and performed with Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, and figured this is the exact platform a 180-gram repress is designed to be played on.

The look and feel of this turntable is a delight. As you can see, it's sparring with Wilson Benesch's Circle 25 (as reviewed in Issue 2) in the looks department. But whereas the Benesch's design is the height of modern art, the Rega is a little less avant-garde. Easier on the eye, but still with a 'wow' factor.

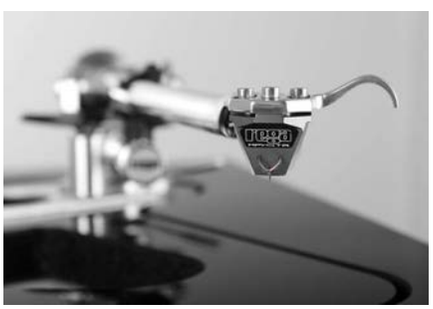
PHATTER PLATTER

I was as impressed by the build as the design; the deck is incredibly light, built on a skeletal plinth made out of polyolefin foam at its core – Rega's latest experiment in a quest to find not only the lightest, but also the most rigid, of plinths. Sitting on top of this is an incredibly heavy ceramic platter; and the included-as-standard RB2000 tonearm is generally regarded as the company's best to date.

It's interesting to see the 45rpm and 33rpm switches positioned not on the turntable itself, for a change, but on the separate power supply (an RP10-specific piece of Rega kit, yet to be marketed and sold seperately). This keeps any prodding away from the more delicate parts of the deck, though we did make sure to move the power supply at least one level of shelving down from the deck itself, to stop any transformer hum being picked up by the cartridge.

The deck worked in perfect harmony with the subs from REL Acoustics (which, very handily, plug straight into the left and right speakers, as opposed to into the amplifier). They seemed to audibly pressurise the room, keeping everything tight and within its four walls. I feared that without them, no matter how hard the Rega worked to reproduce the bass, it would have been dissipated through the partition walls, down into the floor.

What we have here is a specific sort of high-end turntable. The sort for people who play records quite a lot. You could spend the same amount of money on a high-end deck that's designed and engineered to within an inch of its life – fine if you maybe play a favourite piece of vinyl once a month. But if it's more of a daily habit and money is no object, this is the turntable to go for. ●



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THE SEPARATE POWER SUPPLY COULD BECOME AS MUCH A HASSLE AS A 'NEAT TRICK'

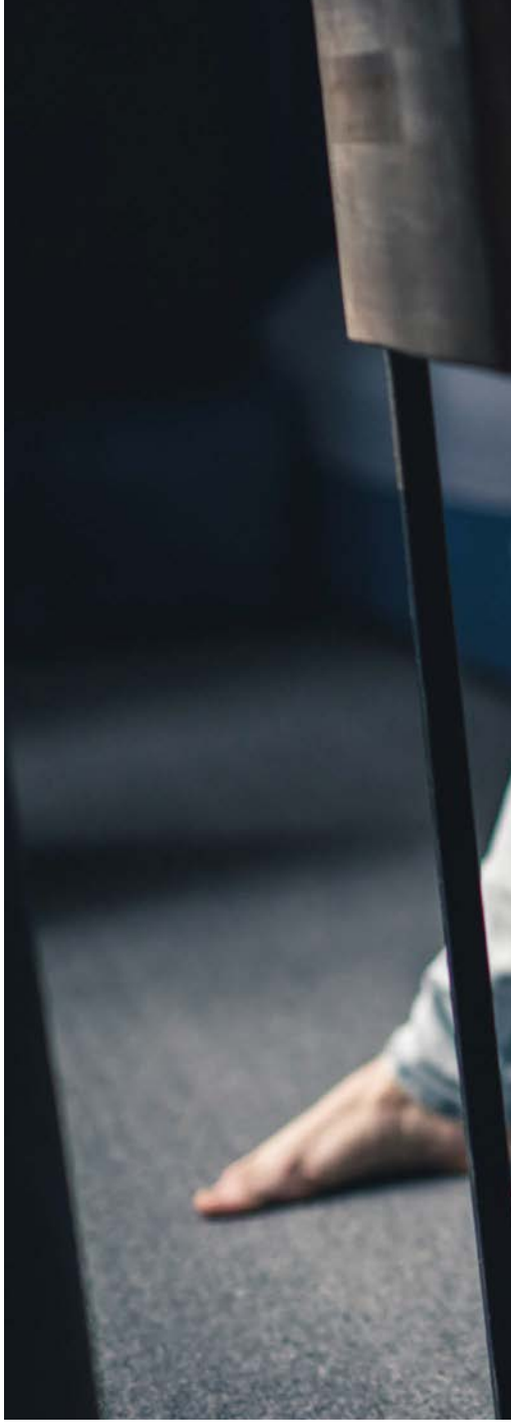
SCORE

31/33 1/3

Part 1

CHANGING ROOMS

If left untreated, a room's acoustic issues can have a major effect on your hi-fi's sound. **Huw Price** identifies and explains some common problems, such as comb filtering, standing waves and flutter echoes…



When reading reviews in hi-fi magazines – and studio-recording publications for that matter – it can often seem odd that room acoustics are disregarded. Think about it for a second – some rooms have a lively and bright sound, while others sound darker and deader. It's one reason why you might feel more inspired to sing in your bathroom than a walk-in closet.

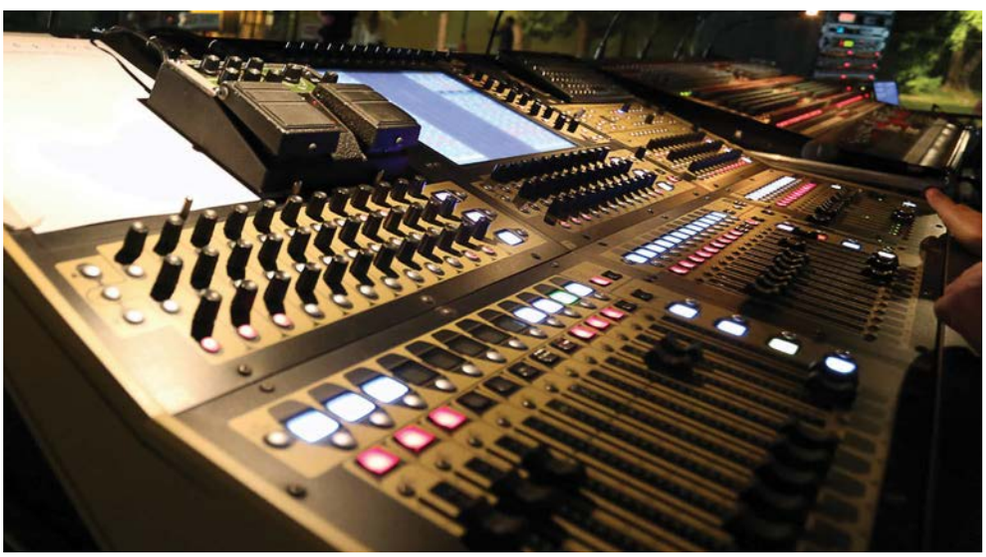
So it stands to reason that the acoustic characteristics of a room will have a strong influence on the way any hi-fi system sounds, because it affects both frequency response and stereo imaging. You may even find that 'upgrading' a system can make it sound worse, if fundamental acoustic issues aren't dealt with.

By failing to recognise and address acoustic issues, which can often be relatively cheap and easy to fix, you may end up wasting money on expensive hi-fi equipment with little or no improvement. When consumers opt to ignore irrefutable laws of physics and prefer to put their faith in buying what may be unnecessary equipment, the results are more often than not disappointing.

Of course, the hi-fi industry produces some incredible amplifiers and speakers, but when you read those technical specifications, you should be mindful that measurements are taken within anechoic chambers.

The only way to achieve accurate measurements is to eliminate all acoustic reflections, and that's what an anechoic chamber is – a room that possesses no acoustic characteristics whatsoever.

Stereo images are conjured up by differences in intensity between sounds, achieved by using pan controls during the mixing process



All images iStock

This is only ideal from a technical perspective, because listening to recorded music in an anechoic acoustic environment is not particularly enjoyable. Even studio rooms, where make-or-break mixing and mastering decisions must be made, have acoustic characteristics that are controlled rather than eliminated. Besides which, if you pull up an image of an anechoic chamber, you'll realise quickly that you will only get away with building one in your house if you live alone.

So let's consider more familiar, conventional living spaces instead. A 'traditional' living room may have

Domestic living rooms are full of sound-absorbing materials which contribute to prominent bass and diminished treble

a carpeted floor, thick curtains and plenty of soft furnishings. All of these materials will absorb sound energy, but their effectiveness in doing so is not consistent across the audible frequency range. High frequencies are absorbed more efficiently than low frequencies, so the sonic signature of this type of room can be prominent bass with soft or even muffled treble.

So how about a more 'contemporary' living room, with laminate or wooden flooring, no curtains and minimal furnishings? In this scenario, far less acoustic energy is absorbed, so the room will sound brighter and livelier. However, clarity and stereo imaging may be compromised, because multiple reflective surfaces allow the soundwaves to continue bouncing around the room for longer, and this compromises intelligibility.

VARIOUS ACOUSTIC ISSUES ARE COMMON TO ALL ROOMS… THESE CAN INCLUDE COMB FILTERING, STANDING WAVES, BOOMY BASS AND FLUTTER ECHOES

Various acoustic issues are common to all rooms, to a greater or lesser extent. These can include a combination of the following – comb filtering, standing waves, boomy bass and flutter echoes. Let's take a look at each of these in turn, and examine how they can impact the sound of your hi-fi.

COMB FILTERING

When listening to your hi-fi, some soundwaves will travel directly from the speakers to your ears and other soundwaves will reach them only after bouncing off the wall, floor, ceiling or all three. The direct soundwaves arrive first, followed by the reflected soundwaves, so there is a phase shift – or indeed there are several phase shifts.

The reflected soundwaves (also known as early reflections) interfere with the direct sound by reinforcing

A less cluttered room will sound lively and bright, but stereo imaging may be compromised, as soundwaves bounce around for longer

and cancelling the waves at various points in their cycles. This creates a series of peaks and nulls in the frequency response that would look like the teeth of a comb on a spectrum analyser display – hence the term comb filtering.

As well as altering frequency balance, stereo imaging becomes less defined and vague and detail is lost. In nature, human hearing relies on differences in time, intensity and phase to determine the origin of a sound. In contrast, stereo imaging is dependent upon intensity differences, since all the acoustic energy emanates from speakers that are ideally equidistant from the listening position.

Mix engineers use 'pan' controls to position individual instruments within a left-right stereo picture. They're just like the balance control on your hi-fi amp, but mixing software and traditional mixing desks provide a pan control for each and every channel. By moving the pan control off-centre, the engineer reduces the volume of that instrument in either the left or right speaker. By reducing volume in the left speaker, the sound will appear to originate from the right of the stereo image.

Since early reflections can increase or decrease perceived volume, they will distort the stereo image painstakingly created by the mix engineer. Undermining the integrity of a track in this way is the antithesis of high-fidelity sound reproduction.

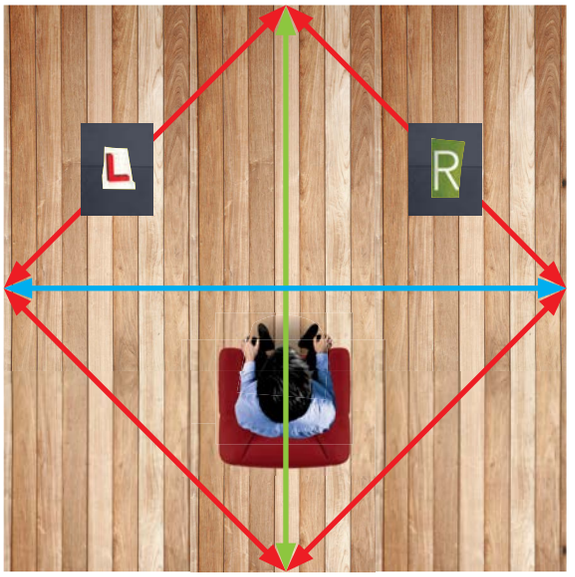
STANDING WAVES

Standing waves occur when two identical sound waves travel between parallel surfaces in opposite directions, when the gap between the two surfaces is equal to the wavelength of the sound. They also happen when the gap between the surfaces is equal to half a wavelength, a third, a quarter and so on.

As with early reflections, constructive and destructive interference will take place when these soundwaves combine – and they will affect the fundamental frequency, as well as higher harmonics. These frequencies are called 'eigentones', so any part of the music that happens to coincide with the eigentone frequencies in your room will be reinforced or diminished, depending on your listening position within the room.

Most domestic living spaces will have a minimum of three pairs of parallel surfaces – the side walls, the front and back walls and the floor and ceiling. So standing waves will always be present and they can occur in axial mode, between two surfaces

COMB DANCING
Reflected sound waves travel further than direct sound waves to reach the listener's ears, and they combine constructively and destructively to create comb filtering



WAVE PICTURES
The green and blue arrows show axial standing waves between the front and rear walls and the sidewalls. The red arrows show a tangential standing wave between all four walls

AS LISTENERS' TASTES BECOME MORE REFINED, THE QUALITY OF A HI-FI'S BASS RESPONSE BECOMES AS IMPORTANT AS THE QUANTITY OF BASS BEING GENERATED

(eg, between the front and back walls); tangential mode, between two pairs of surfaces (eg, all four side walls) and oblique mode, between three pairs of surfaces (eg, all four side walls, plus the floor and ceiling).

Studio control rooms are typically constructed without parallel surfaces; however, non-parallel walls and ceilings won't always eliminate standing waves. Instead, they may become even more complex and difficult to predict and treat.

BOOMY BASS

Hi-fi novices are often in search of ample low end – in other words, lots of bass. As listeners gain experience and their tastes become more refined, the quality of the bass response becomes as important as the quantity of bass being generated.

Are some notes in a bassline louder than others? Do fast basslines become a blur of indistinct low frequencies, and do bass-drum patterns that should be lively and punchy sound more sluggish and boomy instead? If so, your listening room may have bass-response issues that become highlighted with more powerful amplification and full-range speaker systems.

Ideally, every frequency will have an identical decay time in a listening room – however, this is seldom the case. We previously discussed how sound-absorbing materials in more cluttered domestic living spaces are more effective towards the upper end of the audible frequency range. This means that the bass frequencies continue to bounce around in the room long after the upper-mid and treble frequencies have ceased to be audible.

Standing waves and the build-up of bass energy in corners and next to walls can make things even worse, and if the bottom end in your room has a tendency to 'linger on', it can alter our perception of groove and detract from mixes where a tight and punchy low end is intended as the bedrock of the track.

FLUTTER ECHOES

One of the most common (and irritating) acoustic problems encountered in smaller spaces is that of flutter echoes. Like standing waves, this phenomenon occurs when sound waves with a shorter wavelength bounce between two parallel reflective surfaces. This produces successive multiple reflections, which hang over after the event and alter our perception of pitch and tone.

Flutter echoes also impart a harsh and ringing quality to the upper-mid's treble and blur the front end of transients. This can be detrimental to the intelligibility of vocals, fast upper-frequency instrumental passages and percussive content. If you've ever tried clapping your hands in an empty, carpet-free room, or in a stairwell, you'll already be familiar with the metallic trill of the dreaded flutter echo.

Well, that's it for this month, but rest assured – for every problem, there is a solution. Check back next time, when we'll discuss a variety of remedies for acoustic issues that may reveal your hi-fi system actually sounds better than you imagined. ●

My favourite vinyl
GRANT NICHOLAS

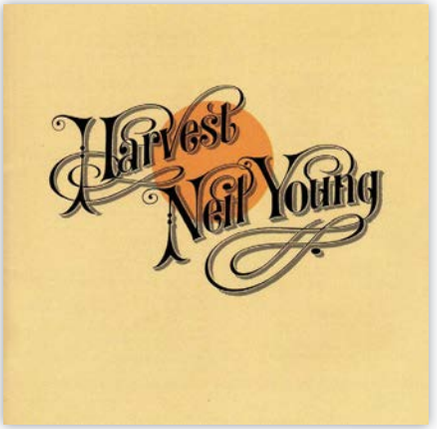
The Feeder main man and solo artist takes us on a guided tour of his record collection and selects six of the best…

HOUSES OF THE HOLY
LED ZEPPELIN 1973

"I have always loved Led Zep since first hearing *Black Dog* when I was eight or nine. They're one of the all-time greatest rock 'n' roll bands and their mix of heavier riffs and folk-influenced acoustic songs made them so dynamic. *Houses Of The Holy* is a great album."

PINK MOON
NICK DRAKE 1972

"Nick Drake was a true talent who has always influenced me, especially when writing my solo album *Yorktown Heights*. He had such a natural vocal delivery, and that grabs you from the off. It's a shame he didn't make more music, but in a way that makes him more special."



HARVEST
NEIL YOUNG 1972

"I am a massive Neil Young fan and was lucky enough to catch his set when I played Hyde Park the same day. His voice is still bang-on and he can rock a crowd as well as he did in his early days. He's someone who has been an inspiration to me. He is a legend and there will never be another like him."

THE BEATLES
THE BEATLES 1968

"The strength and diversity of their writing was mind-blowing. Lennon and McCartney were geniuses, but George was also a very talented musician. Having said that, they wouldn't have sounded the way they did without Ringo. 'The White Album' is really beautiful."

IN UTERO
NIRVANA 1993

"Nirvana were a force of nature, and they changed the face of rock music. It was great to be part of the 90s scene, and Nirvana were like gods. I love the rawness of this album. It would have been easy to bow to record company pressure but Kurt stuck to his beliefs."

RUMOURS
FLEETWOOD MAC 1977

"This album reminds me of my childhood. It brings back so many memories and is still a favourite summer record in our house. It's beautifully recorded and has that warm organic 70s sound that I love. There are some timeless classics on this and it still sounds so good." ●

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